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THE GALILEAN GOSPEL.

BY

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CHAPTER I

BEGINNING FROM GALILEE.

"Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."—MATT. iv. 15, 16.

GALILEE was the cradle of the Gospel. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, began from Galilee," spreading thence throughout all Judea.* It was a fitting birth-place for the kingdom of heaven. First of all it had been pointed out by the voice of prophecy as the place of dawn for a new era of Hope. The fact is duly recognised by the Evangelist, and with spiritual tact he cites the oracle as one finding its fulfilment in the events he is about to record. The appropriateness of the citation is not to be denied, though the circumstances contemplated by the prophets were very different from those which prevailed at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. The darkness which brooded over the region to the west of the sea of Chinnereth, in the days of Isaiah, was the desolation and

* Acts x. 36, 37.

misery caused by the devastating hosts of Assyria. The people in that quarter of the Holy Land felt the curse of war first, because along the way which skirted the lake the Assyrian oppressor marched to conquest. To them, by way of compensation, was to come first, also, the promised redemption. And that blessing, when it came, was to consist in the breaking of the oppressor's yoke, the emancipation of a down-trodden people from the cruel sway of the eastern tyrant, by the power of a Messianic Prince sent by God to deliver His people. Then the people that sat in darkness should see the dawn of a better day for the chosen nation, bringing to the conquered and spoiled the blessings of liberty, peace, and prosperity.

Eight centuries later the position of Israel was in many respects changed. Still she was in bondage to a foreign yoke, but Assyria had given place to Rome. And the yoke of Rome was easy and her burthen light in comparison with those of Assyria. Under her dominion a submissive people, not restive under the symbols of conquest, might enjoy the blessings of good government; security for life and property, and encouragement to industry. The deepest darkness brooding over the land now was not political, but moral and spiritual. The deliverance most urgently called for was not emancipation from a foreign yoke, but salvation from the

night of ignorance, and from the power of sin. The need of Israel was not a political Messiah, but one who could bring to her the light of spiritual truth and the liberty of holiness. Such a Messiah God gave to Israel in the person of Jesus, who came to save His countrymen, not from Rome, but from their prejudices and their sins. He was the true Messiah to whom all prophecy dimly pointed, in whom all prophetic ideals found their highest fulfilment; not less, but all the more, the true Messiah, because His rôle was spiritual, not political; for all true, lasting redemption must begin in the spirit. He began his beneficent work in Galilee, not because Galilee's need was the sorest, for there were other parts of the land where the darkness in some respects was deeper. But Galilee's need was great if not the greatest; the shadow of death which lay over the Lake of Tiberias was deep if not the deepest. Jesus might as well begin His work there as anywhere. And if He did begin there it was natural that the Evangelist should note the fact and signalise its correspondence with the word of prophecy; seeing therein a remarkable fitness, if not an intentional fulfilment, a concurrence by no means accidental, though its true reason might lie below the surface.

But, apart from prophetic considerations, there were other reasons which made it pecu-

liarly fit that the ministry of Jesus should commence in Galilee, or, to speak more exactly, on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias.

1. Among these a place ought to be assigned to *the physical beauty of the scene.* This, in ancient times, for the aspect of nature is much changed now, appears to have been very great. The Jewish historian Josephus speaks of the region in terms of glowing admiration; representing it as the ambition of nature, as possessing a climate adapted to the production of the most diverse kinds of fruits, as bringing forth all manner of fruits in greatest abundance, and especially supplying the noblest of all, the grape and the fig, during ten months of the year.* Even yet, in spite of the desolation and the depopulation which have followed in the track of the Moslem, travellers speak with rapture of the blue lake lying deep in the hollow, the horizon line, the shrubs, the flowers, conspicuous among which are the pink-coloured oleanders—

> All through the summer night
> Those blossoms red and bright
> Spread their soft breasts †

along the little promontories indenting the shore line. The inhabitants of Quito, high up among

* De Bell., Jud. iii. x. 8.

† Keble, "Christian Year," quoted by Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine."

the Andes, have a saying, "after Quito heaven, and in heaven an opening to look down on Quito." Somewhat similar seems to have been the feeling of the ancient Jews with reference to the region surrounding the Sea of Galilee; and even yet there is enough of beauty remaining to bring the feeling within the reach of our sympathies.

That Jesus, who, from all His utterances, appears a lover of nature, should have felt drawn to this region we can well understand. But apart from personal liking, there was a congruity between the scene and the Gospel He was about to preach. That Gospel was emphatically a Gospel of hope, and it was meet that it should be cradled in a region of beauty and sunny brightness. Conceive for a moment Christ commencing His ministry in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea! How unsuitable that land of death, and sterility, and desert desolation to be the birth-place of a gospel which was to remove the blight and curse brought on the world by sin. Let John the Baptist commence his ministry there, but not Jesus. The proper scene of His work is the lake, not of death, but of loveliness. In either case the place was well chosen, viewed as an emblem of the spiritual characteristics of the ministry carried on therein, and of the temper of the agent. John's ministry was legal, Christ's was evangelic; John's temper was

severe, gloomy, despairing, Christ's was genial, kindly, hopeful. Let John then, by all means, go to the Dead Sea, with its salt-encrusted shore and its barren rocks, and there, amid the grimness of nature, preach repentance and the near approach of a Messiah whose coming, as he represents it, is awful news rather than good news. But let Jesus come to the bright, sunny, beautiful Sea of Galilee, and on its shore preach His Gospel of peace, and love, and hope, and show Himself as the sympathetic Son of man, and herald a kingdom of grace to whose blessings even the most sinful and miserable are welcome.

And let us join Him there. "Ye are not come to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion," said the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to his countrymen, who stood in need of consolation, and also of instruction in the true genius of Christianity. In the same spirit, and with like intent, we might say to Christians now, "Ye are not come to the Dead Sea, but to the Sea of Galilee." This is what we would say in this sermon, and in this book. We desire to bring you back to the Galilean lake, to the haunts of Jesus and to the *spirit* of Jesus, to the brightness and sunny summer richness, and joy, and geniality, and freedom of the authentic Gospel preached by Him in the dawn of the era of grace. Some have not yet come to that

happy place; many linger by the Dead Sea, and are disciples of John, to their great loss. For it is good to be with Jesus in Galilee. An evangelic faith, and still more if possible an evangelic temper, in sympathy with the Galilean proclamation, is a grand desideratum. It is what is needed to redeem the evangel from the suspicion of exhaustion or impotence, and to rescue the very term "evangelic" from the reproach under which it lies in the thoughts of many.

2. A second point in the fitness of the locality chosen by Jesus to be the scene of His ministry was the *mixed character of its population.* This was a feature of Galilee as a whole, as well as of the parts immediately adjacent to the lake. Hence the name "Galilee of the Gentiles," as old as the prophet Isaiah. The northern part of Palestine was a border country, and as such was liable not only to experience in an unusual degree the miseries of incessant warfare, but also to have the purity of its blood, and of its national manners, tainted by strangers taking up their abode within it. Originally the name seems to have been confined to the limited district in which were situated the twenty towns given by Solomon to Hiram, King of Tyre, which would naturally become filled with foreigners, and so come to be called the district or circuit of the Gentiles. In course of time

the name was applied to the whole northern territory, probably in consequence of the spread of the foreign element among the inhabitants. In the text Galilee stands as a synonym for the northern tribes, and a Gentile mixture is ascribed by implication to the whole region. And what is indirectly asserted of Galilee in general, is virtually affirmed of the crowded populations along the shores of the lake. The Evangelist means to emphasise the mixed character of that population. He uses with reference to it the expression Galilee *of the Gentiles*, not merely because he finds it in the prophetic oracle which he quotes, but because that point seems to him a very significant feature in the prophecy. He would have us note as characteristic that Jesus began His ministry in a locality occupied not by a pure Jewish race, but by a motley multitude of people of various nationality, Jewish, Syrian, and Greek. For he, too, though in a less degree than Luke, knows, and rejoices in the knowledge, that the light which first shines in Judæa is destined to lighten all the lands, and he finds in the mixed character of the population on which the rays of that light first fell, a prophetic foreshadowing of the fact. If such was indeed the Evangelist's thought, we must admit that it was no mere idle fancy. We perceive it to be fitting that Galilee *of the Gentiles* was selected

by Christ to be the cradle of a gospel destined to universality. It was well that He who, ere He left the world, said to His disciples, "Go and teach all the nations," should commence the work among a people amidst whom Jewish isolation and exclusiveness appeared only in a very mitigated degree. Not that He meant to anticipate the time appointed for preaching the Gospel to the outside world. He did not judge it wise to do so, and He confined his own activity strictly to the Jewish people, the exceptions being such as proved the rule. Hence His avoidance of Tiberias, at the south end of the lake, which was in the whole style of its buildings and manners, a Greek city. But while ever acting as a minister of God to Israel, He did not shun opportunities of hinting, as it were in parable or symbol, that a time would come when the word of the kingdom would overflow the boundaries of the elect people. Such a hint He gave in the choice of the district called in the language of prophecy, Galilee of the Gentiles, as the scene of His labours. The choice meant: "though I personally be a minister of the kingdom to Jesus, My Gospel concerns Gentiles. It is My vocation now to disperse the darkness that broods over Israel, but I came to be eventually the light of the world."

3. A third feature recommending the environ-

ment of the lake to be the theatre of Christ's ministry, was the *density of its population.* The shores of the Sea of Galilee are now almost wholly depopulated, only a few wretched villages being thinly scattered along the coast. But in our Lord's day these shores were crowded with towns, inhabited by great multitudes of busy, industrious people. Josephus writes: "The cities here lie very thick, and the very numerous villages are full of people on account of the goodness of the soil, insomuch that even the smallest of them contains above 15,000 inhabitants."* There may be exaggeration, even gross exaggeration, in this statement, but no one in his senses would make it, unless the region spoken of were in a remarkable degree populous.

This populousness was an attraction to Jesus. On one side of His nature He dearly loved solitude, but on another He delighted to mix in the busy haunts of men. He did not care for the thing called popularity, but He loved human beings. He had an intensely human heart, and He liked to be in the crowd, observing men's ways and work, gaining acquaintance at first hand with real life; and all in order to get close to men for their good, and to the largest number possible. Some crowds, indeed, Jesus did not care to be in, but avoided, the crowd, for example, to be found in the city of Jerusalem;

* B. J. iii. 3, 2.

the reason being that the people there were so encased in self-conceit, and prejudice, and artificiality as to be inaccessible to any influence not wholly conventional and traditional, a risk to which all cities of culture are exposed, and a very serious risk it is. But happily the crowds in the cities of the lake were not in this case. They were simple, natural, open, receptive, partly from their occupations, the chief being that of fishermen; partly because they were a mixed race mutually modifying each other; none, or at least few, being able to boast of pure Jewish blood, and custom; a great advantage, for nothing hardens like pride of blood, and race, and rite. Nothing but the pride of virtue, the worst pride of all. From this also the Galileans were comparatively free, for the simple reason that they had probably not much virtue to boast of. Mixing of races is apt to bring along with it corruption or degeneracy of morals. Of the prevalence of such corruption in Galilee we have an indication in the question of Nathanael to Philip, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"* as also in the note appended to the name of Mary of Magdala—"out of whom went seven devils."†

4. Strange to say, *this very corruption* formed a fourth element in the fitness and attractiveness of the region by the lake, as the scene of Christ's

* John i. 46. † Luke viii. 2.

ministry. It was meet that Jesus should go down to Capernaum, and make it the place of His abode, just because it was *down* not physically merely—lying many feet below the level of the Mediterranean in a great chasm, but morally as well. That descent was the emblem of a gospel which was to be distinguished by the depth to which it could go in compassion for human depravity, not less than by its world-wide length and breadth of interest and range of destination. Not only was it meet that Jesus should go down there for that reason; He was attracted to that low-lying region for the same reason. The corruption of those populations on the margin of the lake drew Him down. Why? Because the greater their corruption, the greater their need of Him. Not only so, but the greater their corruption, the greater the possibilities of good in them once brought to repentance. They to whom much is forgiven love much. One out of whom seven devils are cast, is capable of a sevenfold devotion. The last in depravity can become by grace the first in sanctity. Jesus knew these things to be true, —it is from Him we learn them; therefore He went down to the side of the lake in high hope of making among the people dwelling there signal gains for the Divine kingdom.

From the foregoing particulars, taken together, we already know something concerning the

nature of the "Galilean Gospel." It is a gospel of geniality and joy, smiling as the region in which it is preached; of world-wide sympathy with all classes and races of men; of tender compassion and buoyant hope for the degraded and depraved; for publicans like Matthew, for sinners like the Magdalene. It may be well, however, that we try to form a somewhat more definite idea of the Light that arose on the people which sat in darkness.

The light was the whole ministry of Christ. The Evangelist, thinking of all that Jesus said, did, and was in Galilee, as about to be recorded in his narrative, prefixes to the record this reflection: The people that sat in darkness did indeed see a great light. From the verse immediately succeeding our text, in which it is stated that "from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," we might be tempted to narrow the light to the doctrine of repentance and pardon. But in reality it embraces the whole doctrine of the kingdom, as a kingdom of grace; and besides that, and above all, the person of the King—"the Prince of Peace." More than all he said, Christ Himself was the Light. For "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The sun that rose on the land of darkness, with healing in its wings, was "the Son of Man," the man Christ Jesus. He

was a sun to Galilee, to Judæa, and ultimately to the world, in all the varied aspects of His character and work. In Him appeared such an one as the world had never seen before, recognisable by all who saw Him, and could appreciate His worth and work, as a great Deliverer.

Jesus was as a sun to Galilee specially in four respects :—

First, as a man of *intense sympathy*, whose heart was touched with pity by all forms of human suffering. The evidence and the outcome of this pity were the healing miracles, which might fitly be mentioned first in an account of Christ's ministry because they would be most readily appreciated by the people. Matthew accordingly speaks of this aspect of the ministry in the sequel of the chapter from which our text is taken, telling how Jesus healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. There were many forms of disease to heal, some of a very aggravated and peculiar character. The prevalence of painful, loathsome, mortal disease was one phase of the darkness that brooded over the land. Jesus felt for the victims, and His sympathy was a ray of the light that streamed from Him as a sun. It was so intense that thereby, as the Evangelist elsewhere remarks, He took on Himself men's infirmities and bore their sicknesses. Of this sympathy Galilean sufferers got the

which this earth in all places and in all ages abounds! Poverty, hunger, tears, are everywhere. But where they are Christian blessedness may be, wealth of grace, abundance of righteousness and wisdom, joy in the Holy Ghost.

Finally, another ray in the light of Christ was what we may call *His naturalness as a man and as a teacher*. In him appeared a man of free, untrammelled mind, totally exempt from the spiritual fetters of the time. The appearance of such a man is at all times a boon to be welcomed; but never was there greater need for the light of moral originality than in the days of our Lord. The want of that was the darkest element in the darkness of the age. The people of Galilee were afflicted with the darkness of disease, and with the darkness of sin; but they were afflicted still more grievously with the darkness produced by blind guides. That darkness was densest over Jerusalem, but it was in Galilee too; it was everywhere in the Holy Land. All over Palestine, north, south, east, and west, were to be found those dismal teachers of the law who multiplied rules, and split casuistical hairs, and made life miserable, conscience uneasy, and God's law contemptible. Through their baleful influence the light within, the moral sense, was darkened, and the shadow of death spread over the whole country. What a boon at such a time the ap-

pearance of a man of free creative mind, with fresh moral intuitions, unsophisticated in conscience, fearless in spirit, while averse from controversy and desirous to live at peace with all men. His appearance is a republication of the moral law, a restoration of the light of day in the moral world, after a long night of superstition, hypocrisy, and delusion, driving unclean birds to their hiding places, and encouraging honest souls to come to the light that their deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

Such a moral revolution Jesus wrought simply by being a true man among many counterfeits, a free man among many slaves, a brave man among many cowards, a natural man among many artificial men. Such a revolution he is able to work still, through the same elements of His character, which are also a permanent part of the light which He sheds on the world. And there is need of such revolutions from time to time. For Rabbinical darkness is ever apt to reappear, in new forms but the same in spirit; and when it does reappear, there is urgent need that the moral and spiritual intuitions be restored in their purity and power. Perhaps we should not greatly err if we said that such is the need of our own time. What a bright light would spring up to us were Christ shown to our spirit as He appeared in Capernaum

beginning of his narrative, assigned by Matthew to the Sermon on the Mount; and the fact is not without significance, as indicative of the distinctive character of his Gospel, as compared with that of the first Evangelist. The spirit of the two Evangelists is indicated by what they place first; all the more if what they set in the forefront of their story did not occur so early in the actual history. Judged by this test, the bias of Luke was to regard Christ's work as emphatically a ministry of love, and His words as "words of grace." Matthew, on the other hand, by the same rule, while not insensible, as the Beatitudes show, to the gracious side of Christ's doctrine, recognised in it a legal element, which finds expression in the body of the great discourse.

There is reason to believe that neither of the sermons occupied the place of an inaugural discourse. There is the less reason to doubt this in the case of the sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth, that the Evangelist himself allows us to see he is aware that the ministry of Jesus did not begin there and then, and in the manner described. He knows of things previously done, and we may assume *said* also, in Capernaum.* Though he puts this scene in the forefront, he knows that it is not actually the first scene. It is important to note this fact, as it

* Ver. 23.

helps to obviate objections that might be taken to the utterances and bearing of Jesus in his native town, assuming the incidents recorded to belong to the early period of His ministry. The words, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," involve a distinct claim to Messiahship; the references to the history of the prophets Elijah and Elisha indicate a preference of heathens to Jews; the reflections provoked by the not unnatural surprise of the villagers at the talents displayed in the discourse to which they had listened seem to betray a certain tone of impatience or irritation. These things, it may be said, it has indeed been said, do not suit the initial stage, but could only appropriately happen at an advanced stage in the ministry. They make the end the beginning, to the injury of the history, and even of the character of Jesus.*

All this may be granted without prejudice to the good faith or the accuracy of the Evangelist. For though, for some reason, he placed this scene at the commencement of his story, he does not mislead his readers. His narrative is quite compatible with the supposition that the events recorded really occurred at the late period implied in the accounts of the first and second Gospels;† that is to say, after a ministry

* So Keim in his "History of Jesus of Nazareth."

† Matt. xiii. 54-58; Mark vi. 1-6.

of some duration in the neighbourhood of Capernaum, including the working of many miracles and the utterance of many weighty words, such as the parables recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew.

Why it was that Luke transferred to the beginning what actually belonged to a late time, we shall see immediately. Meantime it will serve a good purpose to endeavour to form as clear a conception as possible of the probable situation — the historical setting of the discourse in the synagogue of Nazareth. And in the first place, we remark that a visit to Nazareth, accompanied by some such incidents as are recorded by Luke, is clearly implied in the narratives of all the three synoptical Evangelists. All relate how Jesus came to His own native place, entered into the synagogue there, and delivered an address which created general astonishment, yet failed to win for the speaker a sympathetic believing reception from his fellow-townsmen, but, on the contrary, had for its final issue deep and permanent alienation. The story in these its main lines has a sure place in the evangelic tradition, distinctly though briefly recognised even in the fourth Gospel.* But in what circumstances did this visit to Nazareth take place? when did Jesus ascend from the sea-shore to His native village, and in

* John iv. 43-45.

what mood? The probable connection of events was as follows. Jesus had laboured for a while among the cities by the lake. His words and works had produced a great impression, which, however, had proved evanescent. The Capernaum enthusiasm had been followed by a crisis bringing a decline of interest in the Galilean Gospel, and of affection for the Great Evangelist. The effect on Christ's own spirit was a deep sadness which found expression variously: in complaints against the cities wherein His mighty works were done,* and very specially in the adoption of a new *parabolic* mode of setting forth His thoughts. For the parables are the reflection of a melancholy mood, and the first parable, that of the sower, reveals very clearly the cause of the melancholy in the presence among the hearers of the word of the kingdom of so many in whom that word would bring forth no abiding fruit.† In yet another way did the sadness of Jesus seek relief, viz., by a visit to His native town. The visit did not mean a change of plan, the selection of a new sphere of work, the abandonment of a population that had deeply disappointed early expectations in favour of a people from whom better things—more receptivity and constancy, were

* Matt. xi. 20-24.

† *Vide* on this my work on "The Parabolic Teaching of Christ," p. 19.

ordinary speaker the intense interest might have been embarrassing, but Jesus rose above all embarrassment and spoke with an inspiration, eloquence, and felicity not to be resisted. The immediate result was universal admiration. But the average of mankind do not long remain in this mood. Admiration soon gives place to envy, and praise to depreciatory criticism. No matter how superior the performance, occasion for fault finding is sure to be found; if not in the person himself, then in his environment. The fault of Jesus lay in His being a Nazarene. He was one of themselves, they knew Him from boyhood, and all His kith and kin, and could give the names of his father and mother, and brothers and sisters. And so they passed from admiration to surprise, and from surprise to irritation. "How gracious the substance of this discourse, and how graceful the manner. But how should a townsman of ours have such rare gifts; nay, what right has he to be other than commonplace like the rest of us, like the other members of his own family? James and Joses and Simon and Judas are all very ordinary men, why should Jesus their brother be extraordinary? Is it credible that he should be so extraordinary as he says; not merely unusually clever, as we cannot deny, but the anointed one, the Messiah, spoken of by the prophet? It would require strong evidence to convince us of this."

So thought the men of Nazareth, so spake they to each other with the wonted freedom of a Jewish synagogue. Jesus knew human nature in general, and Jewish human nature in particular too well, to be hurt or surprised at the feelings visible in their countenances, and audible in their words. The reception He had got appeared to Him only a verification of the truth of proverb-lore expressed in such sayings as "Physician heal thyself," "No prophet is accepted in his own country." These proverbs He quoted to His audience, to show them how well He understood them, and how much a matter of course their ungenerous behaviour was in His eyes. But while thus treating their unbelief as natural, He did not allow them to imagine it was blameless. On the contrary, He gave them to understand that it was a moral defect that brought along with it its own penalty. If a prophet had no honour in his own country, it was not the fault of the prophet, but of his countrymen. For the prophet was not without honour, *save* in his own country, and among his own kin and in his own house. Whence this exception to the universal esteem accorded to one exercising the prophetic office; what is its meaning and import? What but this, a moral blindness that cannot discern nobleness through the disguise of a mean or familiar environment. Such blindness has for its inevitable penalty

that the prophet goes where he gets honour This unpleasant truth Jesus hinted to His hearers by the citation of historical examples. It was a truth which, in one form or another, He had frequent occasion to repeat. Already He had spoken it in effect to the men of Capernaum when He said that if the mighty works done among them had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Now He speaks it to the men of Nazareth, not in anger, but in discharge of a sad duty. Ere long He will have to speak it to the whole nation of Israel, in parables of Judgment, like the Barren Fig-tree, and the Wicked Vinedressers, intimating the transference of privilege despised or abused, from the elect race to the outside world of the Gentiles. It was a truth which the Jews, in their pride, could not bear to hear. The Nazarenes were no exception. The ominous allusions to favours conferred by Hebrew prophets on aliens touched their prejudices and passions to the quick, and raised in the synagogue a sudden tempest of indignation, which threatened the bold speaker with instant destruction.

The whole scene in the synagogue of Nazareth from beginning to end is full of typical significance. Commencing with evangelic discourse, and closing with death-perils, it may be said to be an epitome of the history of Jesus. And for

that very reason it is introduced here by the Evangelist at so early a place in his narrative. Luke, perceiving its significance, has selected it to be the *frontispiece* of his gospel, showing by sample the salient features of its contents. He is not to be blamed for doing this, provided care has been taken to prevent misapprehension as to the true place of the scene in the history. The frontispiece in a book is often taken from an advanced page, from which certain words are quoted to illustrate the picture, the number of the page from which the quotation is made being added for the guidance of the reader. Luke has only availed himself of this literary license, and not without due precautions; for the reference to the works "done in Capernaum," so to speak, gives the historical page from which the frontispiece is taken.

The only question is, has Luke selected his frontispiece well? He is not to be blamed for having a frontispiece; but he might be blameworthy if he gave so prominent a place to a scene not possessing the many-sided significance required. In this respect, however, there is no room for fault finding. The selection is most felicitous at all points. Let us consider the scene in detail more attentively that we may see this.

It is probable that for Luke's own mind the emblematic significance of the scene lay chiefly in these two features: the gracious character of

Christ's discourse, and the indication in the close of the universal destination of the Gospel. These were things sure to interest the *Pauline Evangelist.* That the former feature arrested his attention, appears from the phrase which he employs to describe the nature of Christ's sermon, "words of grace," an expression all the more remarkable that it is of rare occurrence in the Gospels. It goes without saying that he was fully alive to the prophetic import of the final, tragic phase of the scene. In its hints of a wider range for the ministry of grace than the narrow bounds of Israel, the consequent outburst of murderous rage among bigoted villagers, and the escape and departure of Jesus, the historian of the Acts of the Apostles could not fail to recognise anticipations and foreshadowings of similar incidents in the missionary experience of Paul. In this view the present narrative may be regarded as a frontispiece, not only to the Gospel of Luke, but to the combined historical work of which he was the author.

It is a worthy frontispiece, in respect both of the *grace* and of the *universality* of the Gospel. In the first place, the text of Christ's discourse was a most gracious one; none more so could have been found within the range of Old Testament prophecy. It was made more gracious than in the original, by the omission of the

reference to the day of vengeance, and by the addition of a clause to make the account of Messiah's blessed work as many-sided and complete as possible. Its graciousness was further enhanced by the lifting up of the whole ministry of Messiah from the political to the spiritual plane. The mission of the anointed one in the view of the prophet was to deliver Israel from Babylonish exile, and so inaugurate a new year of jubilee, bringing freedom to the captive, and vengeance on the head of the oppressor. The announcement of such deliverance was a veritable gospel, albeit a political one, good tidings, indeed, to the meek, from a most gracious covenant God mindful of His people in their downtrodden estate. But there is a worse bondage than that of Babylon, and a higher liberty than that which releases from an outward yoke. Christ had these in view when he quoted the prophetic oracle. That is not indeed expressly indicated. The words as given are susceptible of either reference. But there are times when old words receive new and higher meanings, and there are times when old meanings demand new words. Such a time was that of Jesus. He came to fill old phrases with a deeper, wider sense, to make the oppressor signify not Rome but sin, and captivity enslavement by evil desires and habits, to make poverty mean more than the lack of outward

conquer physical, social, and moral evil in every shape, and so to inaugurate the acceptable year of the Lord, the new era of redeeming love.

That Christ's discourse was of this tenor the Evangelist indicates when he makes use of the phrase "words of grace" to denote its general character. That phrase, indeed, he reckoned the fittest to characterise Christ's whole teaching as recorded in his gospel, and on that very account it is that he introduces it here. But we may assume that he possessed more information concerning the contents of the discourse than he has communicated, and that he employs the expression "words of grace" to reflect the general impression made on his mind by the details. The discourse, from all he could learn from current evangelic tradition, was emphatically gracious in its strain. The substance was redolent of grace, and the manner of the speaker corresponded: the countenance lit up with the sunshine of hope for the world, the eye moistened with the dew of sympathy, the whole frame instinct with enthusiastic energy; all combining to make a powerful impression even on stolid Nazarenes, whose admiration supplies the crowning proof that the discourse was such as is represented in the narrative. Doubt it not, therefore, that sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth was eloquent in the true sense of the word. Elequence means speaking so that all

that is within one finds utterance. All that was within Jesus spoke out in that sermon, yea, and all that was without Him too. Would that all "preachers of the Gospel," so called, could preach in His fashion, with the air of men that had good news to tell! A gospel is something that makes the preacher himself happy, and which therefore he has pleasure in communicating to others. He therefore is no preacher of a gospel who wears a gloomy countenance, and exhibits a depressed bearing, and whose words sound like words of doom, rather than words of grace, as if he had come forth from a prison, or from some sombre abode smothered among trees whose branches shut out the fresh air and the sunlight, to speak to his fellowmen. Judge not Jesus by such a man; in matter, manner, spirit, this modern preacher differs *toto coelo* from the genial, joyous, winsome preacher of Nazareth.

In so far as the grace of the gospel is concerned, then, Luke has undoubtedly shown tact in selecting this scene to be the frontispiece of his gospel. Text and sermon are most characteristic of Christ's whole ministry, as reported, not only by the third Evangelist, but by all his brethren. No better motto could be found for that ministry than the prophetic oracle read in the synagogue of Nazareth. If Jesus did not actually preach His first discourse from it, He might have done so, taking occasion therefrom

to draw out a programme of His work as the inaugurator of the acceptable year of the Lord.

In respect of the universal destination of the Gospel, this scene is also sufficiently significant. In this connection, indeed, what it supplies is rather omens than distinct intimations. It is hinted that prophets accustomed to receive more honour every where than in their own country, are apt to go where they get a good reception. The anger produced by the hint suggests the thought that prophets ill received by their own people may be forced, whether they will or no, to go elsewhere with their message. The attempt on the life of Jesus foreshadows the tragic event through which the prophet of Nazareth hoped to draw to Himself the expectant eyes of all men. The departure of Jesus from His native town is a portent of Christianity leaving the sacred soil of Judæa, and stepping forth into the wide world in quest of a new home. Significant traits all these justly appeared to the eye of Luke the Pauline evangelist.

The two features most prominent in this frontispiece are just the salient characteristics of the Christian era. It is the era of grace, and of grace free to all mankind. And on these accounts it is the acceptable year of the Lord. It is acceptable *to* God, for God is the God of grace above all things, and it is His

pleasure to embrace in His gracious purpose, not one chosen people, but all peoples that dwell on the face of the earth. And for the same reasons it should be acceptable to us. We should rejoice in the era to which we belong, because therein God's grace is manifest and magnified. It is to our loss if we remain ignorant of the characteristics of the era under which we live, and belong in spirit to the old superseded era of law and limited privilege. It is to our shame if, knowing these characteristics, we remain indifferent to them, and still more if we trample them under foot.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEATITUDES.

MATT. v. 3-12 ; LUKE vi. 20-23.

THE Beatitudes contain Christ's doctrine of happiness. A strange doctrine it must sound to worldly ears! It seems a series of paradoxes, or even contradictions, amounting together to a declaration that the miserable are the happy. Nowhere does the boldness of the Preacher of Galilee appear more conspicuously than in these opening sentences of the Sermon on the Mount. This Man has faith in the power of His Gospel to cope with every ill that flesh is heir to. He speaks as one who has good news for all classes of men, and for all possible conditions. There is no human experience which He regards with despair. And his doctrine is as original as it is bold, not to be confounded with that of any philosophical school. It is not stoicism. The Stoic preached submission to misery as the inevitable, and offered to his disciples the peace of despair. Jesus looks on evil as something that can be transmuted into good, and for all

sufferers has a hope, a reward, an outlook. It is not optimism. The optimist denies evil, or explains it away, and thinks to cure human misery by fine phrases. Jesus admits the evil that is in the world, and speaks of it in plain terms; only, unlike the pessimist, He declines to regard it as final, insurmountable.

The kind of happiness Jesus offers is obviously something novel and peculiar. When He says, Blessed are the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful, He means either that they are blessed in spite of their misery, or that they are blessed through their misery. In either case the blessedness must be something different from what the world usually accounts happiness, something in the soul, not in the outward state. Jesus invites men to reach felicity by the method of inwardness, representing it as within the reach of all just because that is the way to it.

These aphorisms on happiness prefixed to the Sermon on the Mount might have formed a part of the sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth on the acceptable year of the Lord. Only once written in the evangelic narrative, they might have been many times spoken. They would have served well to show how the Scripture quoted from Isaiah had been fulfilled, and to describe the nature of the new era of Grace. They might have been, possibly they were, notes sounded by Jesus on the trumpet of the world's jubilee.

They are certainly among the most characteristic utterances of the new era of Hope.

It has been remarked of the Sermon on the Mount that it seems to be a mixture of two distinct sorts of doctrine, one specially suited for the ears of disciples, and the other such as might suitably be addressed to the multitude. In the judgment of critics, the former kind of doctrine predominates, so that the sermon may be represented as a disciple-discourse with popular elements interspersed.* There is a certain amount of truth in this view, and the mixture, discernible throughout, is traceable at the commencement. Some of the Beatitudes are for mankind, and some are spoken specially for the benefit of disciples. One set contains a specific for the woes of humanity at large, another brings consolation for the tribulations of saints. The distinction is most apparent in Luke's version of the sermon. There three Beatitudes are spoken to the poor, the hungry, those that weep; then follows one comprehensive Beatitude for the faithful servants of the kingdom suffering for truth and righteousness. It was necessary that there should be Beatitudes for both. No gospel is complete which has not consolations both for sinners and for saints, for ordinary suffering mortals, and for faithful elect souls battling with moral evil. It was natural that the Beati-

* This is the view of Keim.

tudes for men in general should take precedence of those for disciples. For the poor, the hungry, the tearful are the majority, the million; nay, the larger category includes the less, for disciples are men, and have once been sufferers and sinners like ordinary mortals, probably are so still; sufferings for righteousness being an additional drop in their bitter cup. The first group of Beatitudes thus concern all, the latter group concerning only those whose vocation it is to be the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. We shall consider the two groups separately, first the universal ones, and then the special.

The *universal Beatitudes* are in number three, the first, second, and fourth in Matthew's list. Matthew's third Beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," may be regarded as a variation of the first. The meek are the downtrodden and oppressed who have no share in this world's greatness, and who accept their situation in a mild and quiet spirit. They are tempted to fret when they see evil-doers prospering, probably at their expense, and to bear a bitter grudge against workers of iniquity. But they bear what they cannot help, and do not puzzle themselves about the mysteries of Providence. And the promise to such as live in this way is that in the long run things will right themselves, and put the meek in the place of the proud.

The Beatitudes of the first group are ambiguous in form. In Luke's version of the discourse they seem to refer to literal poverty, hunger, and sorrow. Christ appears there saying, "Blessed be ye poor;" "Blessed are ye that hunger now;" "Blessed are ye that weep now." In Matthew's version the terms employed to describe the classes addressed in the two first of these sentences have attached to them qualifying phrases which make the characteristics spiritual, and so limit the scope of the sayings, turning them in fact into special Beatitudes pertaining to the children of the kingdom. If the question be asked which of the two forms is the more original, our judgment inclines to that of Luke. Speaking generally, the more pregnant kernel-like form of any saying of Jesus is always the more likely to have been that actually used by Him. The briefer, less developed form is most in keeping with the striking originality of His teaching. Christ, as befits the Sage, loved short suggestive sentences, revealing much, hiding much, arresting attention, taking hold of the memory, provoking thought, demanding explanation. Then the very breadth of the announcements in Luke is in favour of their being the authentic utterances of Jesus. It is intrinsically credible that He had something in His doctrine of happiness for the many, for the million; some such words as

Luke puts into His mouth. The poor in spirit, the mourners for sin, the hungerers for righteousness, are a very select band; only a few of them were likely to be found in any crowd that heard Jesus preach. But the poor, the hungry, the sad are always a large company; probably they embraced nine-tenths of the audience to which the Sermon on the Mount was spoken. Had He nothing to say to them; to catch their ears, and to awaken hope in their heavy-laden hearts? Who can believe it that remembers that in His message to John Jesus Himself described His Gospel as one especially addressed to the poor? We may, therefore, confidently assume that the Preacher on the Mount began His discourse by uttering words of good cheer to those present, to whom the epithets poor, hungry, sad, were applicable, saying, in effect, to such, "Blessed are ye whom the world accounts wretched." It was a strange, startling saying, which might need much exposition to evince its truth and reasonableness, but it was good to begin with; good to fix attention, provoke thought, and awaken hope.

Proceeding now to consider the import of these surprising declarations, we understand, of course, that our Lord did not mean to pronounce the poor, hungry, and weeping blessed, simply in virtue of their poverty, hunger, and tears. The connection between these classes and the

kingdom of Heaven and its blessings is not quite so immediate. Yet Christ was not mocking His hearers with idle words. He spoke gravely, sincerely, having weighty truths in His mind, every one of which it much concerned the children of want and sorrow to know. One of these, the most immediately obvious, was that the classes addressed were in His heart, that He cared for them, sympathised with them, desired their well-being; in a word, that He was the poor man's Friend. This at least is implied in the opening sentence of the sermon, "Blessed are ye poor." The mere fact that this was the opening sentence was most significant. It showed how near the poor lay to the speaker's heart, that at least they had the blessing of His most earnest sympathy. Surely a thing not to be despised! In those days the poor were many, and their state was very abject, and they had few friends. They pined through a dreary existence unheeded, their misery unalleviated by the charities of Christian civilization. But here was One who manifestly pitied and loved them. He is a great prophet and sage, whose words command the attention of all, and His first word is to the poor! Why, His love and pity were in themselves a gospel unspeakably soothing and comforting. Then how suggestive such love in such a Man: this union of humanity with wisdom! How much it imports

that the Great Teacher is also the poor man's Friend! One might have feared that the poor would be beneath His notice; that He would pass them by as people for whom He could do nothing, and of whom He could make nothing; too engrossed with sordid cares to become the disciples of wisdom. Surely the poor man's era is coming; an era in which the poor shall not merely be cared for, but learn to think new thoughts of themselves and their state—learn that though a man be poor he is still a man, and may possess most real riches though destitute of silver and gold.

This, accordingly, was a second truth Jesus meant to suggest to His hearers when He uttered these Beatitudes. The word, "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," signifies that the children of want, though destitute of this world's goods, are not necessarily without a portion. There is the kingdom of God, it is accessible to them. If not actually theirs now it may be theirs, their poverty notwithstanding. It is theirs in possibility and hope, if not in present possession. Poverty excludes from many earthly enjoyments, but not from the blessings of the kingdom. These are within the reach of the poor and wobegone not less, to say the least, than of other men.

Under this aspect, the real point of the first Beatitude lies in the implied assertion that *there is such a thing as the kingdom of God.*

Christ's purpose is to put a new idea, a new object of desire and hope into the minds of His hearers. He refers to the Kingdom of God, as a friend of the poor in our time might refer to Australia or the western prairie-lands of America as a sphere in which industry might find for itself ample and hopeful scope; saying to the subjects of his philanthropic sympathies, "Why pine here in hopeless misery? Yonder in the far west are millions of acres waiting for you, on whieh you may settle, and by the labour of your hands raise abundance of food for yourselves and your children." So Christ says in effect: "O ye poor, hungry, weeping ones, think not your case is desperate. Blessedness is possible even for you; there is a kingdom of God, lift up your thoughts to it, and it shall be well with you."

Of this kingdom of God Christ's hearers for the most part had but the vaguest ideas, many of them possibly had never heard of it before. When they heard the Preacher mention it, they may have asked themselves: Where is it, what is it, this happy land, where the poor man can bid good-bye to his misery? and in all likelihood their thoughts of it were very crude and very material. Even the disciples of Jesus, many days after they joined His society, cherished very inaccurate and gross conceptions of the kingdom concerning which their Master

so often spoke. The Sermon on the Mount, therefore, we may be sure, did not convey full and exact information to the miscellaneous audience concerning the better land. At most it put a new thought into their minds, started an inquiry, let into darkened hearts a ray of hope. But *we* know what the Speaker had in view. He wished to lift His hearers up to the thought that human life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, that there are two kinds of riches, one material, another in the heart of man. The kingdom of God of which He spoke was not a far away land like the north-west of Canada, to which so many of our countrymen are now flocking, seeking escape from bad seasons, and high rents, and ruined crops, and empty stalls. It was within the breasts of the men and women before Him, if it was anywhere for them. It *was* there for them all in germ and possibility. For had they not all minds that might seek after wisdom, hearts that might love righteousness, consciences that might attain to tranquillity? And these goods of the soul acquired, what joy was within reach, nay, what joy was in actual possession! The barrel of meal might be empty, and the cruse of oil fail, but nevertheless the man who was in possession of wisdom, righteousness, and a peaceful conscience, could not be called poor. He had a treasure that might fill his heart with

gladness, and enable him to pound over the rocky places of life with the nimbleness of a gazelle.

The kingdom of heaven thus conceived may appear a very ethereal thing, a most insubstantial boon to offer to the needy and sad. What are wisdom, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost to a hungry man? What, indeed! And yet what are they not, supposing a hungry man actually to possess them? What a boon they would be to Ireland, if possessed by her poverty-stricken, sad-hearted children! They would soon settle the Irish question, soon put an end to assassinations, soon bring even material wealth into that unhappy land. Is the doctrine that there is a kingdom of heaven really then of no account? Can we part with the Beatitudes, which teach that doctrine, without loss? Nay, verily! For the kingdom of heaven is a synonym for the spiritual nature of man. To say that there is a kingdom of heaven is to say that man is a free, moral personality, that he is a *man* and not a beast, that a man *is* a man, in spite of poverty, and hunger, and tears. It is what all the poets and wise men have been saying from the beginning of time, in one dialect or another. It is what all men and nations have believed who have come to much good. It is what our poor, sorrow-stricken ones must believe to make their exist-

ence on this earth tolerable, and their lives worth living. States may pass away, churches and creeds may pass away, and no very serious consequences to the world happen. But if the human race itself is not to perish, faith in a kingdom of heaven, in the human soul, in the spiritual nature of man, in manhood as distinct from beasthood, must abide; and he is no friend of the poor who encourages them to treat this truth as an idle dream with which they have no concern. It has been said, "Justice is like the kingdom of God, it is not without us as a fact, it is within us as a great yearning."* Even if that were all that had to be said, it were still of the utmost importance to respect and cherish the yearning. Jesus Christ was the friend of the poor, not merely because He loved them and pitied their miseries, but because He preached the doctrine of a kingdom of heaven, and preached it to them as a matter in which even they had a vital interest, as offering a bliss not inaccessible to the most poverty-stricken and sorrow-laden.

But Jesus meant to say more than this to the poor and sorrowful: more than "I feel for you; or, the bliss of the kingdom is possible for you." He meant to say this further: just because ye are poor, and hungry, and sad, the kingdom of heaven is *nearer* to you than to others. Your

* George Eliot in "Romola."

very misery may be the means of leading you into the kingdom. That Christ really thought so, His whole teaching and conduct show. He certainly did not, as some pretend, regard poverty in itself as a virtue, nor wealth in itself as a sin. But He did teach that material possessions and worldly felicity created difficulties in the pursuit of eternal life from which poor men by their very poverty were exempt. And, accordingly, He sought disciples chiefly from among the ranks of the poor, as believing that they were most likely to be found there. And the result justified the policy; for it was mainly from the humbler class of society that the kingdom Jesus preached drew its first citizens. The comfortable classes either held entirely aloof, or languidly patronised the new religious movement. And this experience constantly repeats itself in history. All spiritual movements find their earliest and most enthusiastic supporters among the same classes from which Jesus drew His disciples—the poor, the sorrowful, even the disreputable. The well-to-do strike in when the movement has established itself among the institutions of society and become respectable; and their support is often a very doubtful gain, having for its frequent effect the conversion of a Divine cause into a merely human custom, an Evangel into a Pharisaism.

It is not difficult to understand this, to see

how it comes to pass that the last on earth should be first in heaven, the remotest from happiness and even from virtue the nearest to the kingdom of God. Possession and character breed self-satisfaction, which is fatal to aspiration. He, on the other hand, who has neither wealth nor character, is in no danger of becoming self-complacent, and can very easily be convinced that he might in all respects be better than he is. Then the life of poverty, sorrow, and passion is real to grimness; the vain show which conceals truth from the eyes of the world is rudely torn asunder by hard experiences. But to be in contact with reality is always beneficial. It breeds earnest thought, serious purpose, longings after something that can yield true contentment, intense desire to know the secret of human well-being. Thus may the poor man come to have his ideas of poverty and wealth greatly widened and deepened, so as to embrace the inward state as well as the outward. He attains to self-knowledge through the discipline of want, and sees that he is poor indeed, not because he has no gold, but because he lacks the treasure of wisdom; and that he is hungry, not because he is without the bread that feeds the body, but because the soul has not received that which it needs and craves. Then is he not only poor, but poor in spirit; then is he not only hungry, but he hungers after righteousness; then does he

not only weep because of outward calamities, but he mourns over the distance between the actual state of his inner life and the spiritual ideal revealed to his purged vision. And when he has become poor, hungry, and sad in this sense, then is the kingdom of heaven with its riches and consolations not only near him, but within him. For in these very states doth the kingdom of God consist.

That poverty and sorrow should have these beneficent results is by no means a matter of course. Not all the poor are poor in the mystic sense; not all the hungry are hungerers in soul as well as in body; not all those who weep are mourners after a noble sort. These natural states do, indeed, always more or less open up the soul to spiritual influence of some kind. But the influence may be demoniac rather than Divine. Often, perhaps oftenest, it has been such, giving birth to characters and movements having affinity with the kingdom of Satan rather than with the kingdom of God. These two kingdoms and their Heads compete for the allegiance of all whose lot on earth is hard, fully alive to their spiritual susceptibilities, and to the value of conquests from among those whose tempers want and pain have made keen. Such may become either saints or devils, according to the power that gains the upper hand; commonplace they are not likely to be. With

full knowledge of this, Jesus speaks to them from the mount, striving to bring them under His beneficent spell, and save them from the malign fascinations of the wicked one.

Very significant is the place occupied by the poor in the heart of Jesus, and in the history of nascent Christianity. It gives a glimpse into the nature of the kingdom of heaven, showing it to be before all things a kingdom of grace; for what else can that be whose first care is for the destitute and forlorn, the proper objects of compassion? It also teaches the church a plain duty, and suggests an obvious lesson as to the conditions of success in the performance of the duty. It becomes the society that bears the Christian name to remember that by the will of the Master the poor are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and to endeavour to put these heirs in actual possession of their inheritance. But for this purpose one qualification is indispensable. The church must love the poor with an unfeigned, earnest, disinterested love. Those whose lives are hard are quick to discern real from simulated sympathy. Jesus stood the scrutiny of poverty's keen eyes. Need, sorrow, guilt, despite the suspiciousness native to them, were compelled to admit that this man was the Friend of social abjects. And so He gained their ear, and the movement with which His name was associated was in consequence

largely a poor man's, a publican's and sinner's movement. If the same true love were in the church of to-day she would become a poor man's church, and the masses of our population would seek admission to her fold. That so many are without, not desiring to be within, is a thing of evil omen. It means certainly that the powers of evil are busy at work; means doubtless, also, that the children of light have not been busy enough. But it means, there is reason to fear, more than this—the lack of Christ's spirit of sincere intense sympathy with the labouring and heavy laden portion of humanity. We wish to love, we say we love, and we honestly think we do. But the keen eyes of the hungry, the forlorn, the lapsed, search us through and through, and find us wanting. The church of to-day, in all its sections, appears to these classes to exist, not for them, but for the respectable, well-to-do, middle classes, who can pay for pews, and who care for appearances, and covet the good repute of piety; and to be pervaded by a spirit which has more affinity with the Pharisees than with Jesus. A melancholy fact, if true. In proportion as it is true, or is believed to be, the population outside the pale will treat the church as a society of no consequence to them, severance from which entails no loss, connection with which confers no blessedness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEATITUDES—*continued.*

WE have now to consider the second group of Beatitudes, spoken, as we have said, for the special benefit of disciples. They are four in all, three of which relate to disciple-character, the remaining one bearing on the lot of disciples in this world.

"Blessed," said Jesus, "are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

In this triad of aphorisms the Preacher, in the first place, indicated the distinctive moral attributes of disciples, the essential virtues of the kingdom of heaven.

In forming an estimate of any religion or philosophy, critical importance must ever be attached to its ethics. What duties does it chiefly enjoin; what moral qualities does it most warmly commend; what is its list of fundamental virtues? Jesus recognised the

legitimacy of the test, and at once put His hearers in a position for judging. "My religion," He told them in effect, "respects and requires these things above all, pity, purity of heart, peaceableness." The answer is such as we should have expected from one who regarded it as His mission to preach good tidings to the poor. The ethics of Jesus are in keeping with His Gospel, whose burthen is *grace*. His message to the world was: God is gracious; the kingdom of heaven is for the poor, the sad, those who have nothing to give, but can only receive and be thankful. His demand of those who believed this message was: Be ye like the God whom my Gospel proclaims, practise mercy, love peace, and pursue it earnestly, and follow this your high calling with singleness of mind.

The qualities commended and implicitly enjoined in these Beatitudes need little explanation. The first, *mercifulness*, is best understood when viewed in connection with the classes to whom the first group of Beatitudes are addressed. The spirit of pity breathes in these benignant sentences, and Jesus bids His disciples cherish His own spirit and show compassion towards those who want and weep. The import of the second requirement, purity, is less obvious. The term most readily suggests to our thoughts, chastity, or more generally, holiness. But what our Lord had in view was rather purity of mo-

tive, singleness of mind, absolute devotion to the interests and work of the kingdom. A pure heart is a heart united in the love of God and man, not drawn opposite ways by contending affections; by the love of righteousness on the one hand, and by lusts and passions aiming at selfish gratifications on the other. The opposite of a pure heart is a double heart, the heart of the "two-souled man" of whom St James speaks, and whom he represents as unstable in all his ways.* Purity thus defined was a quality on which Jesus was wont to insist as an indispensable requisite of genuine discipleship. Only from such as had pure hearts, "good and honest," noble in aim, and devoted to their aim, did He expect any fruitfulness. All others He expected to prove but temporary, or, at least, unsatisfactory disciples; like grain sown on rocky ground, destined to be scorched by the heat of trial, or in thorny soil, doomed to be choked by the thorns and never to ripen.

The third requirement of disciples, that they be peace-makers, is best understood when regarded as the complement of the one going before. St James writes, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable."† So here, He who is the wisdom of God incarnate, having spoken of purity, proceeds next to mention peaceableness. The saying of the

* James i. 8. † James iii. 17.

apostle may be a reminiscence of the utterance of the Master. In any case, the juxtaposition in gospel and epistle of the two attributes points to a latent connection between the two. In aphoristic discourse, indeed, we may not too curiously enquire into connections of thought. Each sentence stands by itself, a complete whole. Yet even in such discourse the subtle laws of association are at work, influencing the order of utterance, and causing one word to arise out of another. We may therefore assume that all these eight aphorisms are knit together by a network of unexpressed relations hidden beneath the surface. Nor is it very difficult to suggest the links which connect the aphorism concerning purity with that concerning peace. The two qualities mutually supplement and guard each other. Peace helps to define purity, and purity peace. Either tests the other, secures its genuineness, excludes the counterfeit. There is a purity, a zeal for the kingdom, which is contentious; and there is a peace which is bought by a compromise impossible for the single-hearted servant of God; a peace which only they can take part in making, whose supreme guide in conduct is selfish prudence. Christ excludes both counterfeits by conjoining the two Beatitudes which, taken as a couplet, enjoin on the one hand a peaceable purity, and on the other, a pure peaceableness. The former is a devotion purged

from ambition, the latter a love of peace associated with principle. Such a devotion may give rise to division; it did so in the case of Christ Himself; but it will do so involuntarily and with regret. Such a love of peace will endeavour as much as is possible to live on terms of good-will with all men, and to promote harmony and concord all around; but it will have nothing to do with a peace which amounts to a denial of the difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Thus to blend together two attributes often found in antagonism is the task and the art of wisdom.

The possessors of these three qualities Jesus pronounced happy. *Blessed*, said He, are the merciful, the pure, the peace-makers. The declaration implies that the virtues commended are rare, high, difficult, heroic, but it implies more, even that the man who practises these virtues is blessed in his deed, possesses felicity as rare as is his excellence. The nature of his felicity is indicated. Each virtue has its appropriate reward, and contributes its quota to the sum of bliss. The peculiar bliss of the merciful is that they obtain mercy. This fact rests on the law that like produces like in God and in men. The merciful get the benefit of Divine mercy, and awaken by their behaviour a merciful mood in their fellow-creatures. This law occupies a prominent place in the teaching of

Christ. And it is a real law of the moral universe, however it is to be adjusted to our theological systems. It fulfils itself, doubtless, in ways inscrutable, but in some respects its action is simple and intelligible. Thus, looking at the law on the Godward side, is it not certain that only the merciful man can *believe* in Divine mercy? Christ preaches a beneficent gospel of grace, telling men that God is a loving Father, who pities the poor, the sick, the sorrowful, the sinful. But the pitiless man does not believe this. In the first place, he does not wish to believe it, for it would make him uncomfortable in the midst of his heartlessness to think of God as so entirely different from himself. But, moreover, he cannot believe it, cannot so much as conceive it. The gospel of Divine love must needs appear to him an idle tale. The only God he can believe in is a Being as hard, and cold, and selfish as himself: a God who enjoys His own felicity, and cares nothing for wretched insignificant mortals; an Almighty Tyrant, who, to advance His own interest or glory, could trample the whole human race under foot. Such is the inevitable penalty of mercilessness. Inhumanity has for its inseparable companion a theology in which pity has no place.

The bliss of the merciful, on the contrary, is that they can receive, with mind, heart, and conscience, the great fact of God's mercy; give

it a central place in their creed, get heart's ease from faith in it in view of life's sorrows, and peace of conscience in view of moral shortcoming. No small boon truly!

If the reward of the merciful be to enjoy the comfort of God's mercy, the guerdon of the pure in heart is to enjoy the vision of God. The pure, who with singleness of heart seek the Divine kingdom, "see" God, know Him as He is in His moral being, have fellowship with Him so known. This is a still higher felicity. Pardon, peace of conscience, assurance of Divine favour, are precious blessings, but to behold the beauty of the Lord is the boon above all desired by faithful souls. This vision is vouchsafed to all the pure, not in promise only, but in present possession. They *shall* see God, doubtless, but they do see Him even now. They cannot but see Him. They can see Him in their own hearts, in proportion to its purity. The reflection of the sky is seen without fail in a still clear lake in a summer day. Even so, in the heart devoted to the true, and the good, and the fair, undisturbed by the perturbing influence of selfish, base, desire and passion, unpolluted by by-ends and self-seeking, the image of God can be clearly descried. Man's moral nature and God's are essentially one. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. The man of pure heart is light also. For him self-knowledge is

Divine knowledge. He knows God in the very act of loving the good; knows Him and has fellowship with Him. "We have fellowship one with another," says the Apostle John, speaking of the Christian and his God; the reason being that God is light, and that the Christian walks in the light. True it is that of no Christian can it be said, as of God, that in him is no darkness at all. The pure in heart all have defects. Nevertheless their purity is real, and so highly valued of God, that in Scripture dialect the man of pure heart, or single mind, is called perfect, his infirmities notwithstanding. And as the purity may be maintained in the midst of sins of infirmity, so the vision may be very real and blessed before we reach the land of uprightness, where all moral defect shall have passed away.

The pure in heart may not have much share in this world's honours and prosperity. These things fall for the most part into the hands of those who are guided by the maxims of selfish prudence. The single heart is often constrained by its love of the good to choose a path which it knows quite well leads away from the prizes coveted by men of the world. Such a choice the world laughs at. Singleness of mind in such cases appears to men of commonplace morality, foolishness bordering on imbecility. And from their point of view they judge rightly.

Nevertheless waste not your pity on this fool, as you call him. He obtains that which he values more than all he misses. He loses the world, but by way of compensation he attains to the vision of God. He beholds God's face in righteousness, and is satisfied when he awakes with His likeness.

To the peace-makers is awarded the distinction of being called the children of God. This is what Christ Himself thinks of them. They are, in His esteem, worthy to be called the children of God. This shows us, by the way, what idea He has of God. God, in the theology of Jesus, is the great Peace-maker; the King of all whose thoughts are thoughts of peace. The conception is in full accord with the song of the angels, which connects the glory of God in the highest with peace on earth; and with the doctrine of Paul, when he sums up the cardinal interests of the kingdom of God in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is of the utmost moment that this idea of the Divine character should prevail. Its currency means the ascendancy of peaceable dispositions. Let the God of Christendom be the God of Peace, and men will no longer imagine that they do Him service by religious controversy fatal to charity and to the fellowship of saints. It is because Christendom has extensively worshipped another god that the Christian Church presents

—in the suggestion that Christ *was* a Physician. That understood, all becomes plain. For no one is surprised that a physician visits the sick rather than the healthy, and visits most frequently those that are most grievously afflicted with disease. Nor does any one dream of making it an occasion of reproach to a physician that he shrinks not from visiting those whose maladies are of a loathsome or dangerous nature, offensive to his senses, involving peril to his life. That he so acts is regarded simply as the display of a praiseworthy enthusiasm in his profession, the want of which would be reckoned the true ground of reproach. Regard Christ as a physician, and He at once gets the benefit of these universally prevalent sentiments as to what is becoming in one who practises the healing art.

The defence is at once simple and irresistible. And here we may advert to a very noticeable distinction between two classes of our Lord's parables: those, viz., on the one hand, in which He describes and defends His own conduct, and those on the other, in which He depicts the conduct of the unbelieving and ungodly. In the former class, the behaviour of the agents appears perfectly natural and praiseworthy. All feel that it is right in a physician to visit the sick, and in a shepherd to go after a straying sheep, and in a housewife to search for a lost

coin, and in a father to rejoice over the return of a lost son. But when you turn to a parable like that of the *Great Feast*, and read how all the persons invited with one consent refused to come; or like that of the *Vinedressers*, and read how when servants are sent to ask the fruits, the husbandmen instead of rendering the fruits treat the messengers with contumely and violence, you at once feel that the actions described are unnatural and improbable. Who ever heard of a whole company of guests refusing to go to a feast; or of a band of workmen so outrageously violating their covenanted obligations? Whence this striking difference? It comes from this, that the conduct of Jesus, however much blamed, was in accordance with right reason, and could therefore be easily defended by parallels from natural life; and that on the other hand, the conduct of those who despised God's grace, and denied His rights, however common, was contrary to right reason, and therefore could not easily be paralleled by scenes from natural life, but must be represented in parables the opposite of probable in the course of their story.[1]

Returning to the little parable of the physician in our text, we remark, that had the critics of Jesus but accredited Him with the character of a Healer of spiritual maladies, they would

[1] *Vide* "The Parabolic Teaching of Christ" on these parables

not have been scandalised by His habit of associating with the morally and socially degraded. But that Jesus was a physician, was just the thing that never occurred to their minds. And why? Because their own thoughts and ways went in a wholly different direction, and they judged Him by themselves. The Rabbis and their disciples were students of the law, and their feeling towards such as knew not the law was one of simple aversion and contempt. They expected Jesus to share this feeling. Men are ever apt to make themselves the standard of moral judgment. The Rabbi expects all who assume the function of a teacher to share his contempt for the multitude ignorant of legal technicalities and niceties; the philosophe confining his sympathies to the cultivated few, regards with mild disdain the interest taken by philanthropists in popular movements; the mystagogue who invites select persons to initiation into religious mysteries, adopts for himself, and expects all others belonging to the spiritual aristocracy of mankind to adopt along with him the sentiment of the Roman poet: "I hate and abhor the profane rabble." The mass of mankind have eternal reason for thankfulness that Jesus Christ came not as a rabbi, or as a philosophe, or as a hierophant, with the proud narrow contempt characteristic of men bearing these

titles, but as a healer of souls, with the broad warm sympathies and the enthusiasm of humanity congenial to such a vocation. The fact exposed Him to the censure of contemporaries, but by way of compensation it has earned for Him the gratitude of all after ages.

For the fact, duly pondered, is full of didactic meanings, as we now proceed to show.

1. It means, first, that *Christianity is before all things a religion of redemption.* Much is involved in this. If such be its character, then to be true to itself Christianity cannot afford to be nice, dainty, fastidious, disdainful; but must be willing to lay its healing hand on all spiritual maladies, even on those which are most repulsive or desperate. Rabbinism, philosophism, mysticism, may consistently be reserved and exclusive, but not the religion of Redemption. It is bound to be a religion for the million, for the "masses," for the great unwashed in every sense, for the ignorant and erring, for the slaves of evil desire and habit. Its proper vocation is to find the lost, to lift the low, to teach the ignorant, to set free those in bonds, to wash the unclean, to heal the sick; and it must go where it can discover the proper subjects of its art, remembering that the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

The church and the world have a common interest in emphasizing this view of Christianity,

not merely against ancient Jewish and Pagan modes of thought, but against other conceptions of the Christian religion still more or less current, such as, that it is a system of ethical maxims, or of theological dogmas. Both these misconceptions prevail among us. Some conceive of Christ as merely an ethical teacher. Ask such what Christ has done for the world, and they will tell you: "He has taught the great truth that true happiness is attainable only by self-denial." Others very remote from these in their creed, yet kindred in their spirit, think of Christ largely as a theological doctor or revealer of divine mysteries. Ask them what Christ has done for the world, and they will tell you: He has died on the cross for our sins, and He has also taught us many doctrines we could not otherwise have known, such as the certainty of the life to come, and the resurrection from the dead. This is the view in favour with the professional theologian, as the other is that which commends itself to the literary expositor of Christianity. To the one class we must in the spirit of our text reply: "that self-denial is the secret of true happiness was indeed one of Christ's most characteristic sayings, but there is another which was more characteristic still, viz. 'the Son of Man came to save the lost.'" To the other class we say: you err by mixing up things of different nature without attending to

their respective values and their mutual relations. It is rather misleading to speak of Christ in the same breath as a Redeemer and as a theological teacher, not because there is not truth in both representations, but because the facts stated are not of coordinate importance. Christ is in the first place the Redeemer, only in the second the Revealer, in the dogmatic sense of the term. Christianity is primarily a great blessed fact, the reconciliation of men to God and to each other, not a system of dogmas. What doctrines it does teach have their value from the relation in which they stand to the central fact. Revealed religion throughout, from beginning to end of the Bible, has to do with the manifestation of God, as the God of grace, as one who is afflicted with the sins and miseries of men, and in love and pity seeks to remove them. Doctrines are important only as springing out of, and illustrating that grand self-revelation of God, in the drama of redemption.

2. A second item in the permanent didactic significance of our text is *that Christianity is the religion of Hope.* In reference to the foregoing proposition, viz., that Christianity is a religion of redemption, it might be enquired: Is this distinctive of the Christian religion? Do not all religions profess to heal men's spiritual diseases? If we grant the force of the objection to some

exclusiveness, and the introduction of a new humanity, in which Jew and Gentile should be one. They might very easily arrive at this conclusion. They had but to reflect on the terms they employed to describe the objects of Christ's special care. Publicans were to them as heathens, and "sinners" was in their dialect a synonym for Gentiles. It might, therefore, readily occur to them that the man who took such a warm interest in the publicans and sinners of Judæa could have no objection, on principle, to fellowship with Gentiles, and that when His religion had time to develop its peculiar tendencies, it was likely to become the religion, not of Jews alone, but of mankind.

Whether the men who found fault with the sinner's friend had so much penetration or not, it is certain at least that Jesus Himself was fully aware whither His line of action tended. He revealed the secret in the words "I came not to call the righteous but sinners." In describing His mission in these terms, He intimated in effect that in its ultimate scope that mission looked far beyond the bounds of Palestine, and was even likely to have more intimate relations with the outside world than with the chosen race. He knew too well how righteous his countrymen accounted themselves to cherish the hope of making a wide and deep impression upon them. He deemed it indeed a duty to try, and He did

try faithfully and persistently, but always as one who knew that the result would be that described in the sad words of the fourth evangelist, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." And as He had an infinite longing to save, and was not content to waste His life, He turned His attention to more likely subjects; to such as were not puffed up with the conceit of righteousness, and would not take it as an offence to be called sinners. Such He found among the degraded classes of Jewish society; but there was no reason why they should be sought there alone. The world was full of sinners; why, then, limit the mission to the sinful in Judæa? Shall we say because the Jews were lesser sinners than the Gentiles? But that would be to make the mission after all a mission to the righteous. If it is to be a mission to the sinful, let it be that out and out. Let Him who is intrusted with it say, "the greater the sinner the greater his need of Me." That was just what Christ did say in effect when he uttered with significant emphasis the words, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners." It is, therefore, a word on which all men everywhere can build their hopes, a word by which the Good Physician says to every son of Adam "look unto me and be saved."

Christianity being in its own nature, and in Christ's intention, a religion for mankind, it is

the duty of Christians to endeavour to make it in fact the religion of the whole human race. The church, rightly viewed, is a missionary institute for the propagation of the religion of redemption throughout the world. Those who have in fullest measure the spirit of Christ will enter with enthusiasm into this great enterprise, with the enthusiasm of love and of hope, desiring much that the spiritual maladies of men may be healed, and believing in the possibility of cure, even in the most aggravated cases. But alas! it is not easy to have in full measure the spirit of Christ. It is easy and common to patronise philanthropic enterprise with a languid approbation or admiration; it is not easy or common earnestly to desire the conversion of the world to the Christian faith, and to hope for this as a probable result, not soon, but eventually, of missionary effort. In the nominally Christian world there is a deep-seated, widespread indifference to the religious condition of heathen nations—a secret opinion that they are well enough as they are. Even in the really Christian world there is a widely diffused leaven of Celsean scepticism as to the convertibility of certain classes and races. We desire the conversion of all; but we doubt its possibility, its possibility not merely within a few years, but even during the lapse of ages. This doubt causes our hands to hang down; causes us to

suspect that the money spent on missions is wasted, and if not to grudge what we give, at least to wish that we could invest it in an enterprise more likely to yield a return. We much need a baptism into Christ's spirit of hope—intelligent hope, not foolish in its expectations, and ready to die out if the whole world be not Christianised at once, but wise and patient, able to wait long for the fulfilment of its desire, and assured that however long fulfilment tarry, it will come at last, bringing with it the effective "healing of the nations."

CHAPTER VI.

MUCH FORGIVENESS, MUCH LOVE.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven: for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."—LUKE VII. 47.

THE general import of this text is that the measure of a Christian's gratitude to Christ is his sense of indebtedness for the forgiveness of sin. The intenser the consciousness of redemption the deeper the devotion. The form of the sentence in which this truth is virtually taught is due to the fact that Christ, in uttering it, was concerned, not merely to enunciate a general doctrine, but to defend a person under suspicion. A woman of evil repute had come into the chamber where He sat at meat, the guest of a friendly Pharisee, and had behaved towards Himself in a very demonstrative manner, performing acts indicative of intense emotion. These acts had been grievously misunderstood by the master of the house. Simon interpreted them in the light of a past life of shame, and saw in them simply the characteristic manifestation of lawless passion utterly regardless of

propriety. Jesus read his thoughts in his face, and proceeded at once to correct his mistake by suggesting the true explanation of the woman's strange behaviour. What he said was in effect this: "These acts mean love; much, intense, passionate love: there you are right, Simon. But the quality of the love is not such as you imagine. It is the love of a sinner, a great sinner, doubtless, but of a sinner *penitent* and *forgiven*. Forgiven are her sins, her *many* sins, as they must have been, judging from her present behaviour, for these are the acts of one who loves much, and those love much to whom much is forgiven; even as those love little, who like yourself have little sense of their need of forgiveness."

Christ's words were not only apologetic, but doubly apologetic; for the woman in the first place, but also for Himself. For He too had been put on his defence by Simon's evil thoughts. When the woman entered and acted as recorded, the face of the host assumed an expression of undisguised surprise that his guest could tolerate such ongoings. He did not go so far as to suspect the moral character of Jesus, but he drew an unfavourable inference as to his prophetic pretensions, deeming it impossible that one who knew, as a prophet must have done, the character of the intruder, could give any countenance to such flagrant breaches of de-

corum. Jesus therefore was in effect summoned to the task of vindicating his tolerance without prejudice to his prophetic claims. He had to show how He might know all about the woman's life, all that Simon knew, and more, and yet be very willing that she should approach Him with demonstrations of ardent affection. And what He had to say on this score was in substance this: "I am a prophet, Simon, and possess a prophet's knowledge. I know all this woman's history, not merely in virtue of a prophet's supernatural power of omniscience, but more especially through the moral insight which comes from sympathy. I can divine the past from the present scene. I see she has been a great sinner. I see also that she is sincerely penitent. I see that she feels herself indebted to me for some words of mine which have helped her to believe in the forgiveness of sin, and set her on a course of moral reformation. All those acts of intense affection, those hot tears, those flowing ringlets turned for the moment into a towel, those ardent kisses, mean grateful love to a spiritual benefactor. And hence, Simon, understand the interest I take in such people, the pleasure I find in their company. I like to be loved in that way, warmly, passionately, enthusiastically; not coldly and languidly, after the fashion exemplified by yourself in the present entertainment. I desire much love, and

that is why I have relations with the 'publicans and sinners,' the people who have greatly erred. I find that when converted they love me much; a fact quite intelligible, for it is natural that those to whom much is forgiven should love much, as natural as that those to whom little is forgiven should love little. Of two debtors, the one to whom is remitted five hundred pence will certainly, other things being equal, be more grateful to his generous creditor than one to whom has been remitted only fifty pence."

It will be seen that the form of the sentence which states the relation between forgiveness and love requires to be differently put according as it is used to defend the sinful woman on the one hand, or to defend her benefactor on the other. For the one purpose the appropriate form is "much love implies much forgiveness;" for the other "much forgiveness leads to much love."

It will also be seen how beautifully and effectually the saying in either form serves the immediate apologetic purpose for which it was spoken. "She loved much, and for such a woman to love such a man is very improper"—so thought Simon. "She loves much, doubtless; but what if it be the love of a penitent conscious of much forgiveness? Explained by the penitence-hypothesis, where is the impropriety of this impassioned demonstration?" So

answered Jesus defending the woman. "Much forgiveness, much love; but who does not wish to be much loved? I certainly do. Therefore I, in my capacity of Physician of souls, frequent the company of great sinners; for I find that when healed they love most." So answered Jesus defending Himself.

We have now to consider the permanent didactic significance of our text.

1. The first great lesson it teaches is that *sin is pardonable.* "Her sins . . . are *forgiven.*" A very elementary truth, yet a very important one. The early Church recognised its fundamental importance by introducing it into *the Apostles' Creed.* In that ancient symbol no mention is made of atonement, still less is any theory of redemption taught, whether by implication or in express terms. But into the mouth of every one bearing the Christian name is put this confession: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." It is a confession whose momentousness is becoming more and more apparent every day. There is reason to believe that ere long it will be generally felt that, in comparison with this elementary doctrine, all theories as to the mode and conditions of forgiveness are but details of secondary importance. For in these times an increasing number of voices, scientific and philosophic, are declaring, with the emphasis of earnest conviction, that pardon is impossible,

is indeed a word without meaning. This article of the Apostles' Creed can therefore no longer be treated as a trite common-place, or as an axiom so obvious that it scarce needs to be formally stated. It needs to be asserted, yea, even to be defended. We cannot here attempt an elaborate defence, but we may indicate in a few words the lines along which both the attack and the defence may be conducted.

If sin be unpardonable, the obstacle must be in *God*, in *nature*, or in the *sinner*. To place the cause in God, is to say in effect that the Divine Being is malevolent and implacable, the opposite in character of all that we esteem most in men. The Pagan religions, the products of the unassisted human mind in its efforts to find out God, all more or less incline to this view. If they do not represent the gods as absolutely refusing to pardon offences, they certainly represent them as very unwilling to pardon, difficult to appease, and at length granting the prayer of their suppliants with a bad grace. Paganism is a perpetual eclipse of Divine Grace. Many Christians live within the penumbra of this baleful eclipse; but it is impossible for one living under Christian influences altogether to fall away from the faith that "there is forgiveness with God," and that "He delighteth in mercy;" though one has heard sermons in Christian pulpits on these same texts coming very near

to the Pagan denial in the endeavour to prove that mercy is not a distinct attribute of God. One thing that tends to keep Christendom right in its theology at this point is the ethics which it has learnt from Jesus. We cannot long regard mercy, placability, magnanimity, as worshipful attributes in man, and continue worshipping a God who is devoid of them. On the contrary, the tendency of such moral sentiments must be to foster faith in a God who rises above the human level of attainment in these very respects, as far as heaven is above the earth, as the Bible affirms the God of revelation does.

If the reason why sin is unpardonable be found in nature, the meaning is that the laws of nature are fixed and cannot be violated with impunity; so that if a man sin against these laws in any way, as by intemperance, gluttony, or sensual excess, he entails upon himself a permanent inheritance of evil consequences. This is the tone adopted on the present topic by modern science. While the Pagan says in effect, "sin cannot be forgiven, for God is implacable;" the man of science says, "sin cannot be forgiven, for the order of nature is unchangeable." The two positions seem far apart; yet there is a closer connection between them than appears at first sight. The Pagan's thought of God is largely taken from nature. His religion is in fact

nature-worship. And when he asks pardon of his god, it is the physical consequences of sin he has chiefly in view. These he desires to have cancelled; and when, notwithstanding prayers and sacrifices, they remain, the Deity appears to him implacable. Natural religions are the complex product of the observation of nature and of the superstitious fear of an evil conscience. The grim doctrine of science respecting pardon is much the same view of nature expressed in a non-religious dialect by men who neither believe in a personal God, nor are troubled with morbid moral feelings.

When it is affirmed, lastly, that a ground why sin cannot be forgiven exists in the sinner himself, the meaning must be that *repentance* is impossible, and therefore also forgiveness. The lion in the path, in this case, is the fixity of character, the tyrannous power of habit, the difficulty amounting to a practical impossibility of changing the moral bent. The motto of this gospel of despair is the word of the prophet, "can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."* There is much, very much, in human experience to justify the saying, else it had not been found in the Bible. But the oracle was never intended to be a dogmatic assertion of the impossibility

* Jeremiah xiii. 23.

of conversion, and the inevitable doom of evil-doers to persevere to the bitter end in their foolish and hurtful ways. In this light, nevertheless, it is regarded by many even in the Christian Church who treat all attempts to change the bad as the idle efforts of a well-meant but ill-informed benevolence, and confidently anticipate that all the results of such efforts in the shape of alleged "conversions" will turn out superficial and temporary.

Simon the Pharisee also, like all his class, was of this way of thinking; and hence it never occurred to him, never could have occurred, to seek an explanation of the conduct of the woman who entered his house in the hypothesis of repentance. He did not expect such people to undergo moral change; he was sceptical of the reality, depth, and permanence of any apparent change in them for the better. And this judgment he believed to be the judgment of common sense; any other way of thinking he would deem visionary, romantic, foolish.

Yet his guest was decidedly of another way of thinking. Jesus differed from Simon, and not only from him, but from all who on any ground doubt or deny the forgiveness of sin. He believed, and he preached with passionate earnestness, that human sin is pardonable, that no insurmountable barrier to pardon exists in any quarter. First, and above all, he affirmed

that there was no barrier in God. He declared that there was joy in heaven over a sinner repenting—such joy as men have in finding things lost. But he maintained, moreover, that there was forgiveness in nature as well as in God; that is to say, that even the physical consequences of sin were cancellable more or less completely. He endorsed the cheerful creed embodied in the words of the Psalmist, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases," the diseases directly caused by sin not excepted. He healed the palsied man, and he said, "be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." The healing was but an extension of the act of forgiving to the physical sphere. In the spiritual sphere the act banished gloom, and awakened hope; in the physical sphere it restored energy to palsied limbs. Forgiveness amounted to the cure of a paralysis which afflicted at once both mind and body.

This bright faith of Jesus was not a benevolent delusion. It was in accordance with the facts of the universe. For there really is mercy in the bosom of nature, as well as in the heart of God. Nature is not a relentless monster that refuses to give an erring man a second chance. There is a healing power in her, a storehouse of curative influence, an antidote possibly for every disease. Her laws are fixed doubtless, but her laws are not all against the sinner, though

many are, visiting transgression with dread penalties. There are beneficent laws which work in favour of the penitent, helping and encouraging him in the work of self-amendment. To this extent and to this effect let us affirm the creed of the ancient Church respecting the forgiveness of sin, assured not merely of the goodwill of God our Father, but also of the goodwill and kindly succour of the order of the physical universe.

Jesus further believed that there was no insuperable obstacle to forgiveness in the sinner himself. In other words, he believed in the possibility of moral transformation. Sin he knew and declared to be a bondage, but he did not regard it as a fixed final doom. The soul might shake off its fetters; a powerful reaction might take place in the conscience at any moment, resulting in complete and permanent emancipation. At this point he joined issue directly with his host. Simon did not expect such moral reactions. Jesus did. Hence the difference in their judgments of the intruder. To Simon she was simply a sinful woman practising the arts of a courtesan; to Jesus she was an erring one, profoundly, passionately, penitent. In her case had happened what might happen in any transgressor.

2. Yes, in any transgressor; for a second item in the permanent didactic significance of this

text is that *much sin can be repented of, and therefore forgiven.* "Her sins, which are *many*, are forgiven." Christ makes this affirmation in view of all possible conditions of pardon, whether in God, in nature, or in man. There is no reason in this universe, He says in effect, why a grievous offender against moral law should not enter into peace. Not in God; there is forgiveness with Him to any extent, He multiplieth pardons, "with Him is plenteous redemption." Not in nature; for though in the ordinary course of things many consequences of sin remain uncancelled, yet does the whole course of nature conspire to ameliorate the condition of the sincere penitent, and encourage him in his new way. All things work together for his good, even the uncancelled ills of his own state and in the state of others injured by his misdeeds; the one working in him meekness and patience, the other awakening in him a mighty desire to be henceforth a blessing instead of a curse to his fellow-creatures, and endowing him with an intensity of benevolent purpose to which ordinary men are strangers. Not, finally, in the sinner himself. Doubtless sin is a hard taskmaster, and one of the worst elements in the lot of his victims is the fact that the longer they continue in his service, and the more devotedly they serve him, the more difficult is it to escape from his thrall. But even in the very hardness

singing this new song of deliverance to which angels might bear a chorus—

"Weary of earth, and laden with my sin,
I look at heaven, and long to enter in;
But there no evil thing may find a home,
And yet I hear a voice that bids me come.

"It is the voice of Jesus that I hear,
His are the hands stretched out to draw me near,
And His the blood that can for me atone,
And set me faultless there before the throne.

"'Twas He who found me on the deathly wild,
And made me heir of heaven, the Father's child;
And day by day, whereby my soul may live,
Gives me His grace of pardon and will give.

"Nought can I bring, dear Lord, for all I owe,
Yet let my full heart what it can bestow;
Like Mary's gift, let my devotion prove,
Forgiven greatly, how I greatly love."

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOY OF FINDING THINGS LOST.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner repenting, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."—LUKE xv. 7.

THIS thought, the last of the three which together constituted Christ's apology for loving the sinful, is the burden of all the parables in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel—those of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. In these parables Jesus made His crowning effort of self-defence, and gained a signal victory for gracious love, against the frigid criticism of ethical propriety. Noticable is the multiplication of parables in this instance, not merely as an index of creative wealth of mind, but as serving the purpose of the apologetic argument. Accumulation of instances suggested the thought that all mankind, in all positions and relations of life, knew and sympathised with the joy of finding things and persons lost. As one who took pleasure in finding morally-lost men, Jesus thereby ranged on His side the whole human race—men, women, rich and poor, shep-

herds, housewives, fathers, against His critics; so saying to them in effect—"Are ye not men, have ye not the feelings of ordinary humanity, that I should need to explain to you so simple a matter."

Christ's defence of the generous interest He took in the moral recovery of the outcasts, as presented in these beautiful parables, is indeed most complete. Who, after hearing it, could any longer doubt that such interest, even in the case of the lowest and vilest, was rational and praiseworthy? The worst that could be said of those whom morally respectable persons shunned was that they were *lost*—lost to God, to righteousness, temperance, and wisdom, to all the chief ends and uses of life. If so, why should there not be joy in finding them? All men have joy in finding things lost—shepherds in finding lost sheep, housewives in finding lost pieces of money, fathers in finding lost sons. The Son of man only follows their example when He has joy over the finding of morally lost men, and seeks occasions for such joy by taking pains to bring such men to repentance.

The moral of these parables is attached to the first of the three, and in an abbreviated form to the second. It is to be observed that it is not expressed exactly as we should have expected. Christ was on His defence, and the point to be made good was the naturalness and

reasonableness of His own joy over sinners repenting, so that we might have expected the parable to wind up with a sentence like this: "Even so, I also have joy over a sinner repenting more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." But that is not the way He puts the matter. He speaks of a joy in *heaven*, not of a joy in His own heart, though that is what He has to defend, and what He really means to proclaim. The reason of this is to be found in the fact that Jesus stood alone in His time in hoping for a spiritual change among the outcasts, and in regarding such a change, when it took place, with intense sympathy and unfeigned delight. He had no neighbours, on earth, like the shepherd and the housewife, to rejoice with Him. His nearest neighbours were in *heaven*. His back is at the wall; He is one against the world, an absolutely neighbourless man, so far as earth is concerned; and so He is fain to go to heaven in quest of sympathisers, and, sure of finding them there, to declare to his censors: Up in heaven they understand me, there is sympathetic joy among the celestials over the repentance of even a solitary one of these people whom ye despise, in whom I take what to you appears so unaccountable an interest.

Thus far of the immediate apologetic purpose of these parables and their moral. Let us now

consider the permanent didactic significance of the text in which that moral is expressed.

1. The first lesson we learn therefrom is, *that the Divine Being takes an interest in the moral fortunes of mankind.* There is joy *in heaven* over sinners repenting. The reference to heaven is not a mere poetic *jeu d'esprit,* or piece of skilful fencing on the part of a hard-pressed combatant. It is that doubtless, but it is more. It is a declaration of objective truth; it expresses a serious belief on Christ's part that His own sentiments are shared and sympathised with by God. The text above quoted, in short, forms an important part of Christ's doctrine of God. It is just such a doctrine as we should expect to hear from His lips; and it is a doctrine at once credible and welcome. It commends itself to our conscience, as Christ when He first proclaimed it expected it to commend itself to the consciences even of Pharisees. He had no fear of being asked the question: how do you know that the mind of heaven is as you represent? He boldly said what He knew everybody was forgetting, yet what He also knew nobody would dare to deny when said. God-taught souls know when to be strong in assertion, and Jesus knew better than any. He gave a good illustration of His insight in the present case. His bold saying grows in self-evidencing power the more it is reflected on.

It throws us back first on the question, how ought we ourselves to feel in regard to the moral phenomenon presented in repentance. Who can ask himself this question in a serious spirit, without feeling that it is reasonable and worthy to have some pleasure, yea, not a little pleasure, in seeing a foolish person turn wise, a thoughtless person growing thoughtful, a wicked man turning from his wickedness? Can you tell us anything connected with a fellow-creature that may more reasonably give a good man joy? What outward event can befal him comparable in importance to this inward event, this happy beneficent change of mind? Falling heir to a fortune is the event on which men are wont most rapturously to felicitate themselves. But what if, as too often happens, the lucky favourite of fortune behave like the prodigal, and waste his substance with riotous living? In that case the prodigal's return, penniless but wise, is a far more legitimate occasion for congratulation than his forthgoing from his father's house with his purse full of gold, and his heart full of vanity and sensual desire. Whether the average Christian would congratulate a brother more cordially in the former case than in the latter, may be doubtful; for even religious people, it is to be feared, sometimes set more value on outward goods than on the goods

of the soul; on material wealth than on wisdom. But one can see clearly enough that this is not the worthiest or noblest style of feeling; that it is vulgar, worldly, a thing to be ashamed of not only for a Christian, but even for every man with any pretensions to culture. For all persons of culture it is an axiom that wisdom is better than wealth, and that a sinner repenting is a far more interesting phenomenon than a poor man growing rich.

But if this phenomenon be interesting to all right-minded men, why not also to God? Whatever is worthiest of man is worthy of God, and *vice versa.* This also is self-evident to every man who believes in a personal God. There are men in our time to whom the assertion that God takes an interest in the moral fortunes of humanity has no meaning, because God in their dialect means a Being who has no thoughts, no feelings, no purposes, no consciousness, no mind, or a mind no more like ours, as Spinoza said, than the dogstar is like the dog that barks. On those who profess this philosophy our argument will, of course, have no influence. But we appeal to theists, and press on them the question: Why should Christ's doctrine seem incredible? Why should they ask sceptically:

> 'And is there care in heaven? And is there love
> In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
> That may compassion of their evils move?"

Why not, if God be a living God; a spirit, not a blind mindless force?

This theology of Jesus is worthy of all acceptation. A God who enters with intense Christ-like sympathy into the moral life of men is a God we can worship with all our hearts. We want a God who is not merely high, like the deity of Deism, but who humbleth Himself to behold the things done in the earth. We want a God to whom moral distinctions are valid, and to whom, therefore, a change from evil to good can be a welcome event, not a God like that of Pantheism to whom, or which rather, right and wrong are matters of indifference. We want a God who finds His blessedness in the work of redemption, not an epicurean God whose felicity lies in keeping aloof from the miserable lot of mortals. Celsus said that the Incarnation degraded God. Paul speaks of "the Gospel of the blessed God,"* implying that the blessedness of God is compatible with the self-humbling part assigned to Him in the Gospel, yea, that He finds His blessedness therein. The two ways of thinking mark the difference between the Pagan and the Christian modes of conceiving God. Who can hesitate as to which is the more worthy to be believed? Yet strange to say the greater number even of those who profess the Christian Faith do

* 1 Timothy i. 2.

hesitate to believe earnestly and thoroughly their own creed. There is an inveterate tendency to assert the majesty of God at the expense of His sympathy, to believe in His dignity and to doubt His grace. The very texts which most emphatically declare the Divine condescension are perverted into proofs of the contrary doctrine. How often, for example, has the familiar word concerning God's ways being higher than ours, uttered for the express purpose of obviating incredulity in the forgiving grace of God previously asserted with much emphasis, been used by learned theologians to establish the dogma that God's nature is so essentially unlike man's as to be altogether inscrutable. The most recent instance of this we have met with occurs in a work by a well-known writer on the awful theme of Everlasting Punishment. Protesting against false inferences on this subject from the *Divine Love*, the author remarks: "God's nature, character, and method of dealing, is just the most mysterious and difficult subject on which the human mind can be exercised. He has Himself expressly warned us in that passage of the prophet Isaiah, which forms part of my text, that His views and methods of proceeding are different from our own; 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,

saith the Lord.'"* The caveat against sweeping optimistic inferences respecting the future life may not be uncalled for, but the use made of this precious Scripture text in support of the caveat is nothing short of a mischievous perversion. Infinitely nearer to the true meaning of the prophetic oracle is the interpretation put upon it in a hymn worthy of a place in every Protestant Hymnal, albeit of Catholic authorship, containing such stanzas as these:

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea:
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

There is welcome for the sinner,
And more graces for the good:
There is mercy with the Saviour;
There is healing in His blood.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

* "Everlasting Punishment," by E. M. Goulburn, D.D., p. 56.

But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.*

(2) The second lesson we learn from our text is that the Divine interest rests not on the race alone, but also on the individual. There is joy in heaven over *one* sinner repenting. This is still harder to believe. We can imagine the Divine Being not unconcerned about the moral history of the human race as a whole, and even going the length of devising a redemptive plan for bringing *many* sons to glory. But "one sinner that repenteth"—does not that seem too minute an object for the mind of Deity to rest on? Even we, men, find it hard to get up enthusiasm about the repentance, however genuine, of one solitary human being; unless perchance it be some one in high social position, or in some way distinguished among his fellows; a profligate nobleman, a sceptical man of letters, an unprincipled politician, or a fraudulent merchant. When a sinner of such rank radically and publicly repents, there may be an immense amount of gossiping talk about the event, and also some honest Christian joy over it. But

* "Hymns by Frederick William Faber, D.D." This Hymn having, as yet, found a place in few Hymnals, to make it better known we give it at length at the end of this chapter.

when the one sinner repenting is a poor stupid sot who wastes his earnings on drink, or an unhappy creature like her who came into Simon's house and bathed Christ's feet with the hot tears of godly sorrow, an ignorant navvy, a rough sailor, a swearing tinker, a low brutal prize fighter, how vain to attempt creating a sensation by the tale! What does it matter to the world what becomes of such obscure degraded persons, whether they turn over a new leaf, or live and die in their sins? How much more, we are apt to think, must changes in the characters of individual men, however conspicuous, appear utterly insignificant as seen from heaven. Even the conversion of an emperor could hardly make a sensation up yonder, not to speak of the repentance of a Jewish tax-gatherer, or a beggar. Be the penitent a Nero or a Matthew, the event must in either case pass without notice.

Christ declares that the fact is not so, that, on the contrary, repentance in every separate instance is a source of satisfaction to the heart of God. For when He speaks of one sinner He does not have in view picked samples, sinners socially distinguished. He is defending Himself against the charge of having relations with the lowest stratum of Jewish society, and the relevancy of His defence requires that we should understand the "one sinner" to be not

a distinguished sinner like Herod whom the Baptist rebuked, or Caiaphas who heartlessly sacrificed the unpopular Prophet of Nazareth to political expediency, but any sinner picked at random out of the rotting refuse of the community.

It was to accentuate this truth that the second parable was spoken, which after the first may appear uncalled for. It was designed to show that there might be joy over the recovery of things of small value, even of a lost coin of the value of a few pence; such a coin being a better emblem of publicans and sinners, as they appeared to the Pharisees, than a sheep, the emblem first selected. By that parable Christ said in effect: "The repentance of even one of these despicable ones, as you account them, is a source of joy to the heart of God."

This doctrine of Christ's, that God takes an interest in the moral history of individuals, even the meanest, may appear strange; yet surely it is not incredible. For, in the first place, if God really regards with sympathetic interest the moral history of the race, why should He not take similar interest in the moral history of individuals? The multitude is made up of *units*. If we admit it to be worthy of God to turn many to righteousness, we ought not to wonder that He rejoices over even one sinner turning from sin. The real

question is whether the idea of the redemption of the human race be God-worthy. If it be, there is no reason for scepticism as to the Divine interest in the working out of the idea in detail in the experience of individual men. The company of the redeemed consists of individuals having each his own spiritual history; the flock in the fold of single sheep, each one of which has gone astray and been brought back by the Shepherd.

But to understand and fully appreciate Christ's doctrine, at this point we must consider carefully what it implies. Two great thoughts are virtually contained in it, one concerning God, another concerning man. The truth in effect taught concerning God is *that He is the Father of our spirits.* It is easy to see what a light this throws on the question. We can now understand how God can take a loving interest in the repentance of any man, no matter how obscure or degraded. We know what a difference it makes to our own feeling when a penitent is related to us by some close tie of kinsmanship, that of a son to a father for example. And through our own feelings we can understand God's. God rejoices over the repentance of any sinner, because in every such case He sees a dead son come to life again, a lost son found. What hope lies here for those who have sunk so low as to have forfeited

a place in the sympathies of nearly all human hearts! For him who has exhausted human patience, whom the most hopeful of men have given up in despair, there is still hope in God. Even this moral outcast, this sinner despaired of, this wretch considered as good as damned, may return to God with good hope, nay, with certainty of welcome, taking with him words similar to those put into the mouth of degraded, degenerate Israelites, saying: "Doubtless, O God, Thou art my Father, though, the congregation of Thy faithful ones be ignorant of me, and even loving-hearted Christians acknowledge me not. Thou, O Lord, art my Father, my Redeemer from everlasting is Thy name."

The implied truth concerning man is that every man, be he who he may, is, as a moral personality, a being of unspeakable value. The priceless worth of a human soul is one of the great thoughts for which the world has to thank Christ. Formally enunciated in other places it is latent in this text. To say that God rejoices in the repentance of a single sinner is to say that every human being, as endowed with reason and free will, and subject to moral responsibilities and infinite possibilities of good and evil, has a significance for Deity which no *thing*, however vast, not the globe itself, can possibly have. It is a doctrine in which Christianity comes into sharp conflict at

once with the mercantile spirit, and with the scientific tendencies of our age, both of which treat man as of small account. The man of keen business habits cares so little for the higher interests of his fellow mortals that he can enrich himself by trading on their moral weaknesses, and fill his coffers with the pence of tipplers, and drunkards, and opium eaters, and even with the earnings of harlots. Even "Christian" traders and "Christian" nations, so called, can behave in this nefarious fashion. And how cheap is human life when money-making is concerned. The shipowner can send a crew of sailors to sea in a rotten vessel without hesitation, because he can make a little profit so long as it keeps above water, and is insured against loss even if it go down with all hands. Modern science, likewise, cheapens man's value. Its anthropological doctrine is that man is made in the image of the ape, and is destined to everlasting extinction at death; only a little superior to a dog even in his moral nature, and not at all superior to a dog in his destiny. In opposition to both, Christ asserts the importance of man; declaring all souls to be precious, and deeming the repentance of the most insignificant of mortals an event of solemn interest, because it means the saving of a soul, the revival in one more instance of the higher life of the spirit. The

human race has a vital interest in the perpetuation, in spite of commerce and science, of this Christian way of thinking. It tends to the amelioration of society in every respect, as not less surely the other way tends to its degradation.

3. Yet a third lesson do we learn from the moral appended to the parable of the lost sheep, viz., that the aberrations of men, far from alienating the sympathies of God, form a source of special attraction to Him. There is joy in heaven over one sinner repenting *more than over ninety and nine just men that need no repentance.* The joy consists in the peculiar pleasure, known to all, of finding things lost—a joy sensibly greater than that of undisturbed possession. If this joy, the reality of which in human experience is indubitable, be, as Christ affirms, valid also for God, then two inferences follow. First, a fallen race is in some respects an object of more interest to the heart of God than an unfallen one. That seems a very bold thought, and it is one which may be easily perverted. Yet it is not without warrant in Scripture. For, not to speak of this text, Paul avers that sin entered that grace might abound. Man fell that God might have scope for His redeeming love; Divine grace has a career in a world full of sin. Such is the meaning of the apostle, and it is one with which all earnest believers in the creed that

makes grace the highest attribute of the Divine character can cordially sympathise.

The other inference is that the greater the sinner the greater the Divine interest in his change from evil to good. If there be a joy in finding, as distinct from the joy of possession, then the greater the loss, or the greater the trouble of finding, the greater the joy. A shepherd would have a greater joy in recovering a sheep that had strayed many miles from the fold, than in recovering one that had wandered only a short distance. This is no reason for wandering—that were to sin that grace might abound ; but it is a reason for special zeal in the search after great wanderers, and for special hopefulness as to their ultimate recovery. It was one of Christ's reasons for going after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. One reason, we already know, was the intense love He earned by saving those to whom much had to be forgiven. But another was the mere pleasure of finding those who had strayed furthest from righteousness. This motive will tell on all who share Christ's enthusiasm of humanity. And, further, it will sustain them amid the fatigues of the search after lost ones, to think that God has an interest in the restoration of those who have gone furthest away from Him. Let them remember that God's honour as the God of grace is advanced by beautifying

by deeds of a most unwonted character. During the progress of the service, so Luke informs us, one of the hearers, a demoniac, what in our day might be called an epileptic, was overtaken with one of the sudden attacks to which such poor sufferers are liable, and speaking as the mouthpiece of the demon uttered words deprecating the influence of the prophet of Nazareth. Jesus, suspending His discourse, addressed to the poor sufferer, or the spirit that possessed him, a word which was immediately followed by a return to consciousness and sanity. Astonished at His teaching, those present were still more astonished at this display of power.

Leaving the synagogue Jesus returned home to the house of Simon the fisherman and the disciple of after days, to find the mother-in-law of his host taken with a great fever, threatening her life, and alarming friends. Some of these, just come from the synagogue where they had witnessed the marvellous cure of the demoniac, had recourse in their anxiety to the stranger who had come among them, thinking that He who had power over the evil spirits might also have power over diseases of every description. They appealed not in vain. Jesus, full of sympathy and conscious of power, came to the bed side, took the sick one by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto them.

The fame of these miracles spread with lightning rapidity through the town, and the result was that in the evening of the same day, when the sun was going down over the hills, a great crowd of people assembled around the house where Jesus resided, bringing their sick to be healed. Mark in his graphic way states that "all the city was gathered together at the door." Many kinds of diseases were represented in that motley assembly. But no poor sufferer was disappointed. Jesus "healed all that were sick."

Here was a truly Messianic achievement! The first evangelist, who delights to grace his narrative of the ministry of Jesus with citations from the Hebrew scriptures containing oracles that have at length found their fulfilment, will certainly recognise in this wondrous scene an occasion worthy of this honour. He bethinks himself of that weird description of the suffering servant of Jehovah in the writings of Isaiah, and the text which appears to him most apposite is: "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Surely, indeed! The oracle is happily chosen. What strikes Matthew's mind is the *sympathy* with human suffering displayed in these healings. He could easily have found other texts descriptive of the physical side of the phenomenon, *e.g.*, the familiar words of the 103d Psalm, "who healeth all thy

diseases." But it was the spiritual not the physical side of the matter that chiefly arrested his attention: therefore he wrote not "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by David, saying, 'who healeth all thy diseases,'" but "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases,'" translating for himself from the Hebrew to make the text better suit his purpose.

The evangelist has penetrated to the heart of the matter, and speaks by a most genuine inspiration. For the really important thing in the events of that Sabbath evening, and in all similar events, was the sympathy displayed, that sympathy by which Jesus took upon Himself, as a burden to His heart, the sufferings of mankind. That was the thing of ideal significance, of perennial value, a gospel for all time. The acts of healing benefited the individual sufferers only, and the benefit passed away with themselves. But the sympathy has a meaning for us as well as for them. It is as valuable to-day as it was eighteen centuries ago. Yea, it is of far greater value, for the gospel of Christ's sympathy has undergone developments of which the recipients of benefit in Capernaum little dreamed. Christ's compassion signified to them that He was a man to whom they might always take their sick friends with good hope of a

cure. How much more it signifies to us! We see there the sin-bearer as well as the disease-bearer, the sympathetic High Priest of humanity who hath compassion on the ignorant, the erring, the morally frail; who, as a brother in temptation, is ever ready to succour the tempted, whose love to the sinful is as undying as Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And surely we find all this in the scene in Capernaum most legitimately! Surely the doctrine of Christ's sacerdotal sympathy with sinners set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews is a most reasonable development from the healing miracles recorded in the gospels! For it cannot be thought that One who so took men's diseases on His spirit would not also take their sins to heart with at least an equally tender and yearning sympathy. And how much that implies! An ideally perfect sympathy with sinners will make Him who experiences it feel as if He were a sinner Himself. He will go about imputing the world's sin to Himself, confessing it, desiring to take it away, if by any means that be possible; willing to die if that will serve the purpose; thankful if the constitution of the universe will admit of the extinction of the world's sin on any such method.

But while we can easily, and do most readily, read these thoughts into our text, it must be

acknowledged that the text itself contains no allusion to them. What is present to the evangelist's mind in quoting the prophetic oracle is the revelation of gracious sympathy with suffering made in the healing miracles. It may be well that we should refrain from contemplating the scene from the high dogmatic standpoint, and content ourselves with enquiring what we may learn in the same line from the healing miracles of which so many were wrought in the town of Capernaum on that memorable Sabbath evening.

These miracles, then, may be regarded in three lights, in all of which they are full of permanent significance: as a *revelation of Christ*, as *a prophecy of better days*, and as *an inspiration to all who honour the name and cherish the spirit of Jesus*.

1. First, in the miracles of healing we see, with Matthew, a revelation of the sympathetic heart of Jesus. Students of Christian evidences are aware that another view of these miracles widely prevails, according to which they were signs attached to Christ's doctrine to support his claim to be regarded as a divinely accredited teacher. Without saying that this view is altogether wrong or inadmissible, we would say with much confidence that it is quite secondary and subordinate. It seems to have been the view in favour with the men of Nazareth when,

as hinted by Jesus, they expected Him to do among them whatever mighty works they had heard of His working in Capernaum. He had healed a demoniac in the Capernaum synagogue; let him heal another in the Nazareth synagogue. The fame of that memorable Sabbath evening in the town by the lake had reached their ears; let Him rehearse the achievements of that night in His native town, and so prove beyond dispute that He had a commission to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and to perform the functions of Messiah. Strange to say, Jesus wrought very few miracles of healing in Nazareth, far fewer than in Capernaum, although He could not but have had a desire to show kindness to His fellow-townsmen, His former playmates and schoolfellows, by healing the sick in their families. He wrought fewest miracles where they were most needed, if the chief end of miracles was to supply evidence of Messianic claims. He can hardly have been of the mind that such was their chief end. Not only did He not work many miracles in Nazareth, but it is recorded that He could not. "He could there," says Mark, "do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them."* The reason was the lack of believing receptivity. The Nazarenes, with their demand

*Mark vi. 5.

for signs of Messiahship, and their cold, critical temper, paralysed the arm of the Lord. Not that Christ's power depended for its existence on the faith of recipients of benefit, but that, like every other spiritual power, it was apt to be thrown back on itself by a chilling unsympathetic attitude. An orator is apt to fail when addressing an unsympathetic audience; a skilful musician seldom succeeds in bringing out of his instrument its finest effects amidst dull, inappreciative listeners. Genius is a shy, retiring spirit, which manifests itself only to faith and love. Even so with the miraculous healing power of Jesus. It existed independently of popular moods, even as does the oratorical power of the speaker, and the musical talent of the performer; but it manifested itself only amid favouring circumstances.

And this very fact proves that the working of healing miracles was not with Jesus a matter of calculation, but rather of the spontaneous forthputting of endowment. He did not say, "Go to, I will work a miracle at this point, to give authority to what I have stated." He did not cure the epileptic patient in the Capernaum synagogue to back up the sermon, and make the hearers regard it as the discourse of a prophet, or divinely commissioned man. He wrought that cure in spontaneous instinctive response to the cry of suffering. The need of

the sufferer appealed to His sympathy, and sympathy brought into play curative power.

According to this simple, natural view, the miracles of Jesus were, not less than His preaching, a revelation of the grace that dwelt in Him. His words in Nazareth, in Capernaum, everywhere, were "words of grace;" His works were likewise works of grace; equally with the words a forth-flowing from the well of love within, not mere signs attached to these to increase their credit. In full accord with this view is the general character of Christ's wonderful works. They were not mere astonishing feats, prodigies, magic transformations of dead pieces of wood into trees, or of human beings into stone statues, and the like. They were beneficent works, having a sufficient motive for their performance in the desire of the doer to confer benefit.

One recommendation of this simple view of Christ's miracles is, that with it we can walk in company so far with men who do not believe in the miraculous in the strict sense of the word; that is, in that which rises above nature, or is contrary to nature. For it so happens that there are not a few nowadays who are utter disbelievers in the supernatural, who nevertheless believe the evangelic reports of our Lord's healing works to be in the main true. The view they take is that these works, though very surprising and unusual, were yet wrought ac-

cording to some obscure laws of nature belonging to the department of "moral therapeutics," which have as yet been very little studied. Christ, by some happy endowment of His nature, was *en rapport* with these laws, and hence it came as easy to Him to heal disease by a word, as to an ordinary physician to cure ailments for which specific remedies have been discovered. Now this theory of "moral therapeutics" may appear to us a very far-fetched one; but it has this one merit at least, that it enables unbelievers in the supernatural, without open inconsistency, to admit Christ's healing works as matters of fact. Thus far they can go with believers, and it is well. But they can go further. With believers they can regard these works as the direct outcome of Christ's sympathy. They do so regard them, and they take pleasure in expatiating on the intensely humane spirit revealed in these works; the deep, tender sympathy with the world's woe, yearning to heal it, and by its very yearning to a certain extent successful. This, too, is well. It is good that at least the Redeemer's *love*, if not His supernatural power, should be admitted by men of all schools. And that is a reason why we should accentuate the view of miracles according to which they are a self-manifestation of Christ's gracious love, as distinct from the view according to which they are signs attached to a system of doctrine to

accredit it as Divine. The latter view the adherents of a naturalistic philosophy cannot accept, because it implies a strictly supranaturalistic conception of miracles. But the former they can and do accept, and just on that account we should give prominence to it, while declining to acquiesce in a merely naturalistic conception of the Gospel miracles. For it is well, we repeat, that the love of Christ should be universally believed in, accepted as an essential part of the catholic verity by the whole of Christendom. It is well that Jesus should stand out to the eye of the whole world as the One Man who loved the human race with all His heart, who burned with desire to consume the world's sin and misery—to bear the sin as a High Priest, to heal the misery as a Physician; and who, because of the ardour of His love, accomplished feats which made men wonder at the time, and which make men wonder still.

2. The Gospel miracles are, secondly, a *prophecy of better days for the world.*

The days of miracles, we often hear, are past, but Christ's mighty works nevertheless did not happen in vain. They *are* a system of signs, as well as a revelation and a monument of the Saviour's love. They are signs that disease does not belong to the true order of nature, and prophecies of a good time coming when the true

order shall be restored. Such they seem to have been in Christ's intention. Judging from His conduct, there were two things which He greatly desired—the extinction of sin, and the extirpation of misery. These things He would do if He could. The will was there at least if not the power. Not only did He desire these things, but He believed them to be attainable. He laboured at both tasks in hope, achieving some results by His personal efforts, but believing far more to be possible. This mind of Christ has much significance for a believer. To unbelief, of course, it will appear simply the hallucination of a deluded but amiable enthusiasm, whose loving heart dreamt of impossibilities. But to faith, Christ's hope is a ground of hope. Because He hoped believers look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and along with it health and peace. They regard the earth in its present state as a mother groaning and travailing in pain, comforted amid present sorrows by the expectation of a glorious birth. Of all this the Gospel miracles are a sign and prophecy. They are indeed a sign and prophecy only to those who believe, not to those that believe not. To unbelief, will and power in Christ are divided, to faith they are conjoined. He can do all He desires. His desire is the indica-

tion of the will of heaven, whose power is felt through all creation.

3. Once more the Gospel miracles are an inspiration to all who honour the name and cherish the spirit of Christ. They say to such, "Go thou and do likewise." We cannot do all Christ did, but we can adopt His aim, and work for it according to our ability. We can resolve to live for the good of man in every sense, spiritual, social, physical, and strive to give effect to our resolution as we have opportunity. There may be cordial co-operation here on the part of men whose theological attitudes are wide as the poles asunder. All can be disciples of Jesus in this who care for their kind. The sum of the Christian religion is to believe in God's love, and to love God and men. There are many in our time who have dropped the first item in this summary out of their creed, and have ceased to believe in a God of love. Their religion reduces itself to the cultivation of a generous interest in humanity. Even they can be fellow workers with Christ by giving practical effect to their own meagre creed. Let them do good as they have opportunity. Let them cherish and propagate benevolent affections, and act on them, not merely theorise about them. All who do this serve Christ's cause, even though it should be involuntarily. Not only so, they share Christ's faith, more

perhaps than they might care to acknowledge. Christ believed that the world could be made better, and He regarded it as a high duty to care for the weak, the sick, the frail. There are those who do not share these convictions. The pessimist does not regard the world, or mankind, as improvable. The world in his view is a gigantic blunder, human life is not worth living, man is a contemptible creature, and the doom of the race is to grow worse and worse, and eventually to perish. The Darwinist, faithful to the theory of the survival of the fittest, might consider it best for the interests of mankind that the weak, the sick, the frail, should be allowed to perish, or even be actively dismissed from the world. Thereby at least the physical condition of man would be greatly ameliorated. These dark doctrines no professor of the "religion of humanity" can accept. He must look on the future of man with hope, otherwise the nerve of his energies would be cut. He cannot adopt the law of the survival of the fittest as a principle in morals, for he must feel that in so doing he would be sacrificing the spiritual to the physical, and destroying the sacred instinct of sympathy which is the conservative salt of society.

It is for those who are disciples of Christ in a far higher sense to see to it that they are not outstripped in the race of philanthropy by the

adherents of this modern religion. Let such remember that the outcome of all true faith and piety is humanity. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."* The good Samaritan is the true Christian. The man who can witness human want and suffering and pass by on the other side may be very religious, very orthodox, very scrupulously attentive to all proprieties and holy customs, but he is not a Christian. Christ says to all such, "I never knew you."

In the foregoing discourse we have deliberately abstained from entering on the high path of theological contemplation, that we might emphasise those aspects of Christian truth in which the greatest number can agree. We have thrown the interests of the soul into the background for the moment, that the claims of the body might have an opportunity of asserting themselves. The former interests are the higher, but they are the subject of much dispute; the latter interests, if the lower, are those in connection with which there can be co-operation on the part of men far from each other in their theological opinions. And surely this co-operation is very much to be desired. For while the saving of the soul, in the high transcendental

* James i. 27.

sense, is the supremely important matter, the salvation of men even in the secular sense, the improvement of their condition in this life is a thing worth working for. For this end all may worthily labour, each man in his own sphere and after his own fashion; men of science, physicians, statesmen, manufacturers, ministers of religion. The labour of so many fellow-workers cannot surely be in vain, and we cannot doubt that it is well pleasing to God.

Yet while we labour earnestly for the physical and temporal well-being of man, we may not forget that man is a being who belongs to two worlds. He who bears this duly in mind will see in Christ's miracles more than a revelation of His compassion for human suffering, a prophecy of better times, and an example to be imitated by all lovers of their kind; even types of higher miracles to be wrought in the sphere of the spirit. Believers in the literal miracles of the Gospel believe also in these spiritual miracles; in the reality of those recorded in the pages of history, in the possibility of similar miracles of grace still. So believing they will desire and expect ever new manifestations of Christ's power to heal souls, doubting not His willingness, and profoundly conscious of the world's urgent need. Humbly hoping in Him who Himself took our infirmities and bore our

sickness, let the Church while the ages roll take up her evening song and pray:

At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
O in what divers pains they met!
O with what joy they went away!

Once more 'tis eventide, and we,
Oppressed with various ills, draw near.
What if Thy form we cannot see,
We know and feel that Thou art here.

O Saviour Christ our woes dispel:
For some are sick, and some are sad,
And some have never loved Thee well,
And some have lost the love they had.

And some are pressed with worldly care;
And some are tried with sinful doubt;
And some such grievous passions tear,
That only Thou canst cast them out;

And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free;
And some have friends that give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in Thee:

And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
For none are wholly free from sin;
And they who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within.

O Saviour Christ, Thou too art man,
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.

Thy touch has still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POWER OF FAITH.

"I have not found so great faith no not in Israel."--MATTH. viii. 10.

"O woman great is thy faith."—MATTH. xv. 28.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible nto you."—MATTH. xvii. 20.

"Thy faith hath saved thee."—LUKE vii. 50.

THESE texts, and others of kindred import, show what a high place faith held in the esteem of Jesus. Faith was in his view a great force. It could work miracles; uproot mountains; bring about mighty moral changes ; it was a necessary condition of his own ability to do miraculous works. Striking manifestations of faith were a great source of delight to Him. He remarked upon them ; He praised them ; He even went so far as to express surprise and admiration on witnessing them.

This prominence of faith in the thoughts of Christ is only what was to be expected in one who preached a Gospel of grace. Grace and Faith are correlatives. A Gospel of grace is a

Gospel which proclaims a God whose nature it is to give. The proper attitude of those who worship such a God to the Object of their worship is that of recipiency. God bestows His gifts, we receive them with thankfulness. No marvel then that Jesus, the Herald of the kingdom of grace, should speak much, and with emphasis, of faith. It had been otherwise had He been a mere Preacher of moral law. His favourite word then had been not *Faith* but *Repentance*. This accordingly was the Baptist's motto. Among the numerous points of difference between John and Jesus this has to be reckoned that the watchword of the one was *Repent*, that of the other *Believe*. The difference corresponded to their diverse conceptions of the Divine character, the one regarding it from the point of view of retributive righteousness, the other from the point of view of love. The one said "God is holy and his kingdom is drawing nigh, prepare yourselves for its coming by reforming your lives." The other said "God is good, and He is approaching you with blessings in His hand; open your hearts to receive His benefits."

In the teaching of our Lord, we find no attempt at a definition of faith. He used the word in a simple popular sense rooted in Old Testament usage, and took for granted that the religious instincts of His hearers would help them to understand sufficiently what He meant.

But the import of the term as it occurs in the Gospels might be expressed by the single word "receptivity." An open mind receiving the announcements of the kingdom as at once *true* tidings and *good* tidings, credible and worthy of all acceptation, such was faith in the dialect of Jesus.

As thus defined, faith appears a very simple thing, not beyond the capacity of a child. And simple indeed it is, simple as the opening of the mouth to inhale air, or to receive food. Nevertheless faith is not a commonplace virtue. It is a heroic attainment, implying qualities of mind and heart by no means to be found in every man you meet. Faith of some sort is indeed as common as to breathe. In a sense, all men, not merely the just, live by faith; no human being could subsist without it. The husbandman sows in faith, counting on the earth bringing forth of itself, first, the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The sailor steers by faith counting on the compass pointing steadily to the pole. The emigrant sets out on his voyage in faith, trusting to the skill and care of the captain to bring him through the perils of the deep to the far distant port on the other side of the ocean. In such instances faith is the easiest thing in the world, comes to us instinctively, is without merit, confers no distinction; the exercise of it earns no praise, for none but a fool would act other-

wise. But it is different with religious faith. In the sphere of religion faith is exercised about matters which appeal to the higher nature of man, and which it requires a certain moral elevation to appreciate. Here too the things about which faith is conversant are out of the common course. We have to do with the unusual, the unexpected, the improbable, the apparently impossible. The exercise of faith on such objects demands high, rare qualities; power of original thought, imagination, freedom of mind from the bondage of custom, audacity to conceive and expect things out of the beaten track. In short, a believer in the religious sense, to be at all conspicuous for his faith, would need to be at once a spiritually minded man, having his heart set on lofty objects, and in a sense a man of genius, poetic, romantic, a dreamer of dreams, of free untrammelled spirit, not custom-ridden in his ideas—such a man as Abraham who by faith made his life morally and even intellectually sublime. The way of faith is by no means a broad road trodden by all travellers, wise or foolish; it is an arduous footpath rising over rocky precipices to snowy alpine summits.

If the fact be so the unreserved admiration of Jesus at signal manifestations of faith becomes intelligible. And that the fact is so we can in part learn from the instances recorded in the

Gospels; those, especially, of the Roman centurion, and the Syrophenician woman.

In the case of the centurion faith reveals itself as a power of conceiving great thoughts, and of dwarfing into insignificance mountains of difficulty. The idea of this soldier is, that just as the hundred men under his command are at his beck to come and go and do as he pleases, so all the powers of nature are ready to do the bidding of Christ. This is a sublime conception of the power of the Lord, worthy to be placed alongside the magnificent conception of the divine government suggested by the words of the 103d Psalm:

> The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye His hosts; ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure.

The idea here is: God sitting on a throne as Ruler of the universe, surrounded by a host of ministering spirits waiting orders, who so soon as they have received the word of command, fly off as on the wings of the wind, or the swifter beams of light, to execute their commission. Much the same was the centurion's thought, not borrowed from the Psalmist, but originating in his own mind. What Jehovah was to David's imagination that Christ the Son of man was to

the devout fancy of the Roman soldier—even the emperor of nature, generalissimo of all cosmical forces, capable by a word of making all the laws of the universe and all the elements run his errands.

Was it not a great original idea? But now, observe, it was an idea, the credit of which belonged to the centurion's faith. To conceive it required more than a clever brain, even the daring spirit of which faith alone is capable. Granting that the analogy between Christ's power and that of a military commander might, for a moment, suggest itself to any thoughtful mind, none but a man of strong audacious faith would have been able to detain the thought, and entertain it as a reasonable one, still less to utter it aloud as just and true in the hearing of the world. A man of weak faith would have dismissed the idea as soon as it entered his mind as a Utopian dream, or at least kept it to himself, not venturing to utter it for fear of being laughed at as a romantic fool. But herein lay the strength of the centurion's faith, that he not only could conceive the idea, and familiarise his own mind with it, and get the length of venturing to utter it, but could utter it as if he were saying nothing at all remarkable, but the merest matter of course—a thing that might occur to any one, and which he probably fancied everybody understood and believed.

Unbelief cannot entertain such grand ideas of divine power. Its thoughts of all things divine are mean, tame, conventional, custom-ridden. So far from being able to originate thoughts like that of the centurion, it cannot even receive them, for they are foolishness unto it.

The centurion's faith showed itself, further, as a power of dwarfing into insignificance mountains of difficulty. It saw no formidable obstacle in the way of the accomplishment of its object. Weak faith *makes* difficulties, but strong faith *annihilates* them. It takes up mountains and throws them into the depths of the sea. The Roman soldier's faith looked on the healing of the sick slave as the easiest thing in the world. "Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." Weak faith could not speak in this wise. It might say, "Lord, I have heard that Thou hast a marvellous power of healing, and I have no doubt of Thy *benevolence:* Come and visit the patient, and if possible cure him." Weak faith can believe in small miracles, but not in great ones. It is therefore rationalistic, always mixing up natural and supernatural causes, giving to the former as large a place as possible, and shutting the latter into a corner, so making miracles easier and more credible. Strong faith makes no distinction between great and small miracles. It

attaches no importance to neighbourhood, or contact, or any other natural means as conditions of cure. It says not like the nobleman of whom St John tells, "Sir, come down ere my child die," but like this simple soldier, "speak the word and my servant shall be healed."

Such faith is never common. It was not common in Israel, the home of miracles, physical and moral. The faculty of faith had nearly died out among that people in that generation. It was a stupid generation, stupefied by custom, prejudice, form, routine, pride. Scarce anywhere was there a fresh eye, and a young open heart, quick to discern and to welcome a new living revelation of God and truth. They could only believe in old revelations respectable for their antiquity, and consecrated by tradition. Therefore Jesus was very thankful to meet with an occasional instance of faith, simple, pure, and free enough to be able to recognise in Himself, and in His teaching, and in His deeds of mercy, something divine and worthy of all acceptation. He hailed it as the children of Israel hailed a well in the wilderness, who, when they found so unlooked for a boon, in their gladness celebrated the discovery with a song saying:—

"Spring up, O well: sing ye unto it,
The well which princes dug,
Which the nobles of the people hollowed out
With sceptre and with staves." *

* Numbers xxi. 18.

The divine Pilgrim meeting, in his journey through a moral wilderness, with a believing soul like the centurion, was as one who had come unexpectedly on a spring, and at sight of it exclaimed: Spring up, O well! welcome to your crystal waters: Spring up in the desert for solace to the thirsty traveller!

In the woman of Canaan faith again revealed itself as endowed with genius, and as a power of surmounting difficulty. The genius of faith showed itself this time not so much as a faculty of conceiving grand thoughts, but rather as a talent for ready wit. The talent in either case was congruous to the nationality of the person. Great serious thoughts became the Roman, ready wit the Syrian. The Syrian woman's quick wit showed itself on this wise. To the harsh objection, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs," she replied, True, Lord, for also the dogs eat of the crumbs falling from the table of their Master. She accepts the position assigned to the Pagans, that of dogs, but not of dogs without, of *household* dogs, taking advantage of the diminutive form of the term employed by Jesus, which was commonly applied to domestic dogs, and so turning His words against Himself. "Dogs—so be it then, let us have the dogs' portion; for they have a portion, the crumbs that fall from the table." It was a happy *jeu d'esprit*, indica-

tive of a natural brightness of mind, and a vivacity of temper that could assert themselves even in the most unpropitious circumstances. But it was more. It was a triumph of faith. Faith gave the heart to utter if not to conceive the genial word; faith which could see into the heart of the Stranger, and discern his goodness in spite of rough words. But the flash of inspiration, not less than the courage to speak the bright idea, came from faith. The woman could never have hit upon so happy an idea unless she had believed it possible for heaven's grace to reach down to the level of Gentile dogs. But for that conviction latent in her soul she had not noticed the advantage Jesus gave her in the use of the kindly diminutive, which implied that those to whom the epithet referred had some kind of connection with the household. And it was no mean faith that was able to entertain such a conviction. Among His own countrymen Jesus was thankful to find a faith that was able to believe in His power to benefit even those belonging to the chosen people. He hardly looked for more in a Jew than this homeward-bound faith in a grace adequate for Israel's need, but available for none beyond. But here, in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He finds a faith of a much wider sweep. Here is a poor woman who, with sorrow-stricken heart, comes to Him seeking help for her afflicted

child, believing that He is able and willing to work marvellous cures, believing that He has wrought many such cures among His own people; but believing, moreover, that His power and His will to help are not limited to Judea, that there is no reason why they should be so limited, that heaven's grace cannot possibly be thus hemmed in by geographical boundaries. Here, in short, on this Pagan soil, is a faith that anticipates Christian universalism, and makes bold to affirm the great axiom afterwards enunciated by Paul: God is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. No wonder Jesus exclaimed, O woman, great is thy faith. Of this faith, even more than of the centurion's, it might truly be affirmed that the like was not to be found in Israel. The quick wit was not the most remarkable thing about it. The really remarkable thing was that which made the quick wit possible, the power to overturn partition walls, and to level the mountain range of election which separated Jews from Gentiles, and so to make a straight way for the kingdom of grace to enter with its blessings even into Syrophœnicia. And all this with perfect humility while with characteristic audacity. "We are unworthy, we are dogs, we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and we have no merit and no claims: yet we dare to believe that Divine love can reach even us poor un-

clean Pagans." This faith not only levels mountains, but fills up a deep valley of humiliation, whose existence it frankly recognises. It performs, in short, all sorts of engineering feats in the construction of a world's highway of grace.

Christ's whole heart went forth in unaffected admiration of this magnificent display of faith in a most unexpected quarter. Of course He granted the request; but His ultimate compliance was more than an exceptional favour to a Pagan, in homage to a most exceptional spiritual insight. It was a virtual proclamation of the great truth that before faith all barriers must go down, that wherever there is recipiency on man's part there is communication of grace on God's part, no matter what the nationality of the believing soul, even election notwithstanding.

Equal to His admiration of the genius and courage of faith was the confidence of Jesus in faith's power to bring into the soul, in all the plenitude of moral influence, the kingdom of heaven. He gave faith credit for power to triumph over the greatest moral hindrances, to bring peace into troubled hearts and consciences, and to clothe the greatest sinner in the beauty of holiness. We learn this from the story of the woman who entered the house of Simon. To this woman Jesus said, Thy faith hath saved

thee, go into peace. The cheering word meant much. The expression "saved" is not to be restricted to the one blessing of forgiveness of sins, though that is specially included, as it was expressly mentioned just before. Jesus meant to say that faith would do, had already done in principle, for the sinful woman, all that needed to be done in order to a complete moral rescue. It was as if He had said, "You have faith, I see, it is all right with you; faith will do everything for you, bring into your heart the blessing of forgiveness, emancipate you from the bondage of evil desire and habit, transform you from a sinner into a saint; go in peace: you are as good as healed." Whence had He this confidence? How was He not afraid to lay so much stress on faith? Why did He dismiss the intruder without giving her a bundle of moral cautions to carry in her memory, as helps against future temptations? Partly, we fancy, because He had more faith in great principles than in petty rules for keeping men right; partly also, doubtless, because He was generous, and wished to hope the best for one who had made a good beginning in a new life. But chiefly, we apprehend, because he saw what faith had done already. Had not the reception by her of the good news filled the soul of this woman with unutterable love to the Preacher, and to the Father in heaven, whose grace He

revealed; had it not transformed her into a poet, a heroine, a devotee, capable of setting conventionalism at defiance in ardent demonstrations of penitence and gratitude? Here, before the eyes of all, was a new spiritual creation, all due to faith, producing, through the nature of the thing believed in, and its priceless value to the recipient, intense love, which, by deeds more eloquent than words, says, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant: I am thy servant! Thou hast loosed my bonds." Well might Jesus say, "Thy faith hath saved thee," for no more complete demonstration of the restorative power of that faculty by which we let the Divine grace flow into our hearts can be desired. True, it was only a beginning. The good resolutions of the hour had to be persevered in through a life of virtue, and that, experience tells us, is no easy matter. Excitement cools, enthusiasm dies out, evil thoughts return, temptations present themselves, and relapses are probable. Yet it is a great thing to begin, to go through a great crisis of repentance, an agony of godly sorrow, to look one's sin straight in the face, to call it by its true name, to say, "By the help of God I will bid farewell to these evil courses." It is also a great thing to have taken, once for all, into the mind the cheering creed that God is a Being who helps those who desire to do well; that the Divine Spirit sympathises with

them in their struggles, makes intercession for them in their weakness, lifts them up when they fall, and, holding them by the hand, leads them on to the land of uprightness.

Faith can do yet more than this—more than make a beginning in the new life, and cling on to God for help to persevere. It opens the soul to healing influences of all sorts, stealing in from every quarter, not in themselves gracious, but serving the purposes of grace, coadjutors of the gospel, fellow-workers with God. If, as there is reason to believe, the woman that had been a sinner became after the memorable scene in Simon's house, a member of the company that followed Jesus in His wanderings, what soothing, peace-giving influences, what helps to godly living were within her reach! The beneficent occupation of ministering to her benefactor, the virtuous attachments springing up between the persons who constituted the society of Jesus, yea the very sights and sounds of nature, would be as ministering spirits confirming the broken and contrite heart in peace and purity. When the heart is tender it is very impressionable, and it receives impressions through every sense of the body, and every faculty of the soul. The birds sing to it songs of gladness, the winds sighing amid the pines sympathise with and console its sadness, the murmur of the brook

charms away bitter thoughts like the prattle of childhood ; the delicate odour of wild flowers awakens in some mysterious way old memories of happier days, which open afresh the heart's wounds yet heal them. Are these not all ministering spirits, aids to, extensions of the Gospel, a gospel in nature conspiring with the written gospel to complete the soul's cure? Yes, and so are the outgoings of affection in social life, and all opportunities of converse with the thoughts of the wise and the gifted through the spoken word or the written page, setting before us the true, the honourable, the pure, the lovely. These are all accessible to faith, and only to faith. For faith we have seen signifies receptivity, and without receptivity no healing, soothing, sanctifying, influence can come to us from nature, from society, from literature, or from Christ. But where receptivity is there all things work together for good. And for the comfort of those whose lives have been made tragic by sin, and by physical disease and mental gloom, its too frequent accompaniments, let it be said that the heart that has been broken by contrition, and pain, and despondency, is the heart in which delicate sensibility and receptivity to all beneficent influence is likely to reach its maximum. "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Moral mediocrities like Simon, and the elder brother

in the Parable, are "saved" from many risks and sorrows by their virtues; it is the waifs and outcasts, the children of passion, who in all senses are saved by *faith.*

With these thoughts of Jesus concerning faith's power we all sympathise. As Protestants we assign to faith a prominent place and vital function in our creed. But it suffices not to have a sound doctrine of faith. We must have faith itself. The two things do not necessarily go together. In spite of our orthodoxy on the subject of faith's function, it may be a thing we much lack. In that case we render very bad service to our creed; do what we can to bring it into disrepute, and to make men become disciples of the Baptist rather than of Jesus. How little we know of the power of faith! What a blessing to the church were a faith like that eulogised by Christ! It would open our heart to the love of God and fill us with joy; it would emancipate us from the power of evil; it would deliver us from idolatry of the past and make us hopeful of the future; it would purify our motives from the taint of worldly wisdom; it would make us creative in thought, large in sympathy, saintly in character, heroic in conduct. Lord increase our faith, and make us acquainted with its power in all spheres of life!

CHAPTER X.

THE VICARIOUS VIRTUE OF FAITH.

"Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."—MATT. ix. 2.

THERE are many points of interest connected with the Gospel story of the healing of the palsied man. There is the method adopted by the friends of the sufferer to gain access to Jesus, made difficult by the crowd surrounding the house (not alluded to by Matthew); the combination of the forgiveness of sin with the cure of the physical malady; the offence taken by scribes present, at the assumption of authority to forgive sin; and the spirited reply of Jesus to His critics. But the most striking feature is one not named, and seldom referred to in expositions of the narrative, or referred to only to be explained away. It is that Jesus was moved to heal the sick man by a regard to the faith of his friends, displayed in their energetic efforts to obtain access to His presence. "Jesus seeing *their* faith said unto the sick of the palsy; son, be of good cheer." The "their" evidently refers

to the friends, as distinct from the sick man. To make the pronoun include him and to say, with a well known writer on the miracles, "the sick man was approving all which they did, or it would not have been done," * is simply to subject exegesis to the tyrannous control of dogmatic prejudice. It is also to go against the natural probabilities of the case. The nature of the disease of itself excludes the supposition that faith was in active exercise in the person of the sufferer. It was a case of palsy. Mind and body were both alike paralysed. The poor victim was passive in the whole process, from the formation of the purpose to bring him into Christ's presence to the moment when the word was spoken which issued in a cure. He could neither think nor act, neither form a plan nor carry it into execution, he could hardly even so much as entertain a wish. He lay a helpless lump of animated clay, living and that was all.

It was therefore by a regard to the faith of His friends that Jesus was moved to bless this man. And when we say this, we bear in mind that the blessing included not merely the healing of disease, but the forgiveness of sin. Both benefits were conferred for the sake of the believing friends. For it is to be observed that the spiritual benefit came first. The soul was

* Archbishop Trench, "Notes on the Miracles."

first healed. Only after the forgiveness of his sin had been announced to him did Jesus say to the sick one, "Arise take up thy bed and go unto thine house."

We have here, therefore, a very emphatic recognition of the value and power of intercessory prayer, or if we may so express it, of *vicarious faith*. Christ, God, we are taught, hears prayers of believing men, offered up not for themselves but for *others*, for neighbours, friends, relatives, palsied in soul, who do not believe, and who do not pray for themselves. God has regard to the faith of this man in His dealings with that man, and does good to the one because of the generous loving interest which the other takes in him. This is a truth which may easily be abused; it has, we know, been very grievously abused. But we may not allow the fear of abuse to deprive us of the comfort contained in the truths stated. We must insist on its validity within the proper limits. It has its limits. No man can be saved in the full sense of the word by another man's faith; personal faith is, as a rule, requisite in order to salvation. God deals with men not in mass only, but also individually. Yet, while this is true it is also true that intercessory prayer has a place in the Divine method of dealing with the children of men. God deals with men not merely as individuals, but as

social beings grouped together in families, tribes, nations, and naturally drawn by the ties which connect them, and by the affections springing out of these, to take a loving interest in one another's temporal and spiritual welfare. In virtue of this truth, given on the one hand in any family or brotherhood, a member thereof palsied in soul by scepticism or vice, and on the other hand, the other members of that brotherhood duly exercised in his behalf, we may expect one day to hear of that palsied one being delivered from his spiritual malady, and having a new song put into his mouth in praise of Him who forgiveth iniquity, and healeth our diseases, and redeemeth our lives from destruction.

As this is a doctrine which men are slow to receive, and still slower to act on, it may be well to show how thoroughly rooted it is in Holy Scripture.

That God has regard to the prayers, faith, and piety of some men on account of other men, is not doubtfully taught in one solitary isolated text, such as that quoted from the gospels. It is a principle which pervades the Bible. It comes in very early, standing forth in bold relief in the history of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Abraham was a magnanimous, philanthropic man, whose thoughts and affections did not revolve in a narrow circle, with

self for its centre. He took a kindly humane interest in all his neighbours, even in those with whom he had very little in common. Therefore, when he learned that the wicked cities of the plain were about to be destroyed, he immediately addressed himself with the utmost earnestness to the task of intercession for their preservation. Nor were his intercessions unavailing. God had respect unto them. Abraham's prayers did not, indeed, prevent the destruction of Sodom, but they procured a conditional promise of salvation in certain specified circumstances. And the conditions are very instructive, viewed in connection with our present subject. God promissd to spare the city if there were fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, *ten* righteous men in it; Abraham bidding down to the last figure, and no further, apparently from a feeling that a city in which there were not even ten good men, good even in the Pagan sense of being virtuous and exemplary in their lives, was not worth saving. There is thus a twofold recognition of the vicarious principle in this interesting portion of the patriarch's history. God recognised the value of intercessory prayer in listening to Abraham pleading for Sodom; He also recognised the value of vicarious righteousness in declaring Himself willing to spare Sodom and its sister cities of the plain for the sake of ten worthy men; willing, so to speak,

to impute or reckon to the credit of the unrighteous *thousands* the righteousness of the worthy *ten*.

The history of this patriarch supplies yet another illustration of the doctrine. "Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman." Isaac, the son of Sarah, was the heir of the promise, the elect son, so to speak. Ishmael, the son of Hagar, was outside the covenant; but Abraham loved Ishmael, his first-born, though not his heir, and his heart yearned for the outcast. He could not endure the thought of his extrusion from the home of his childhood. While expecting with much interest the birth of the heir of the promise, yet he did not desire that the favoured one should have a monopoly of Divine favour. Therefore he ejaculated on Ishmael's behalf, the short but most fervent and heartfelt prayer, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"* And God heard that prayer even for the non-elect Ishmael, promising him a place in His "uncovenanted mercies." God said: "Sarah thy wife shall bear a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and

* Genesis xvii. 18.

will multiply him exceedingly, twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."*

As we follow down the stream of sacred history, we meet with numerous other instances of prevailing intercessory prayer. There is the notable instance of Moses praying God to forgive the sin of idolatry committed by Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. "Oh," said the noble-hearted leader of the chosen race, "this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet, now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not (mark the characteristic self-devotion of the patriot: he hardly dares to finish his prayer, but he dares to wish himself accursed for his brethren's sake!), and if not blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." What now was God's reply? This: "whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." This *first*, indicating the limits within which the vicarious principle is confined. God will not damn one man for the sake of another; nor will He save a man from damnation for the goodness of another, while the man continues in mortal sin—no, not. though that other good one should be the *Lord Jesus Christ.* But then it is added, "therefore now, go, lead the people unto the place whereof I have spoken unto thee;

* Genesis xvii. 19, 20.

behold mine angel shall go before thee."* Israel is not to be destroyed after all; she is to be led into the promised land though she has made herself an object of disgust to the Divine mind, by her stupid, thoughtless behaviour, she is to be borne with for Moses' sake. She is forgiven out of regard to his intercessions, and his self-effacing patriotism.

Further multiplication of examples is unnecessary. We may simply allude to the stress laid on the mere *memory* of David at critical times in Israel's history. When Sennacherib's army lay around Jerusalem besieging it, God wrought deliverance for Israel partly out of regard to the prayer of the devout Hezekiah, but partly also out of respect for the pious memory of David the hero-king, the man after God's own heart. The message sent through Isaiah to the king concluded thus: "Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria: he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this land, saith Jehovah. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake."† What a respect is shown to David's name by its being thus put on a level with God! *Mine own sake, and David's sake.*

* Exodus xxxii. 30-34. † 2 Kings xix. 32.

The doctrine we teach is thus unquestionably Scriptural. It is, moreover, *reasonable*. It can give a good account of itself before the bar of philosophy. It is a wise, God-worthy policy which encourages men to pray, live, and even die for one another, by the assurance that they pray not, live not, die not in vain. If it is desired that men should take a generous interest in each other, this is the way to get them to do it. Tell men that there is no use in praying for others, and sanctifying themselves for others, that every man must pray for himself, and be holy for himself, that no man can by prayer or holy living do his brother any good; then, of course, men will cease praying for others or troubling themselves in any way about their fellow-creatures. For who would pray for praying sake, or vex one's soul about things which he cannot help? And what sort of world would this be were there no praying men in it; no Abrahams interceding for Sodoms; no Moses-like men ready to have their names erased from the book of life rather than that their country should perish; no Pauls who could wish themselves accursed from Christ for their brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh; no Christ-like men bearing the sin and misery of their fellow-men as a burden on their hearts? Why, it would be a world given up to universal selfishness; heartless as well as prayerless,

inhumane as well as godless, a sunless world full of blind men knowing not whither they went, stumbling against each other, and knocking each other over into the mire. Such the world to a large extent is, even under the actual moral order; but bad as the world is, it would be far worse were the vicarious principle to be eliminated from the system of the universe. Think twice before you vote for a decree to that effect. He who desires it knows not what he is doing. He desires the extinction of the sun with its blessed light and heat, the abrogation of the royal law of love exemplified and glorified by the death of Jesus Christ. For these two laws—the law of love, and the law of vicarious influence which makes it possible, by earnest supplication, to bring down blessings on the heads of fellow-men—stand and fall together. If you wish to rid your religious creed of intercessory prayer and vicarious self-sacrifice, and all kindred ideas appearing to you antiquated and barbarous, you must understand that the sum of the Ten Commandments, Love God supremely and thy neighbour as thyself, must go after them. For how can a man love God supremely who has not shown himself capable of a love without stint, and how can a man love his neighbour as himself who never prays for his neighbour as he prays for himself?

To make the matter clear by a particular

case, look at this scene from the Gospel history. See these four strong men carrying their palsied relative on a couch into the presence of the great Physician; determined not to fail of their purpose, uncovering the roof, since no other mode of access is possible, and letting the sick man down to the place where Jesus stands preaching to the vast multitude. It is a pleasing, heart-stirring sight. There is nothing fairer to look on in the world than such a display of enthusiastic generous interest in the well-being of a suffering fellow creature. But that scene would not have occurred had the law of this universe been: every man for himself, no man's faith, prayer, or effort, available for any but himself. For the poor sick man could not believe, could not pray, could not speak, could not even think; and in the case supposed his friends could not have believed, prayed, spoken, thought, or acted for him. And in such a world they would not have tried to do so. The affections of men living in such a world would ultimately become assimilated to their surroundings. The laws of the universe giving no encouragement to anything but selfishness, there would soon be nothing but selfishness in it. And so the friends would have left the sick man to his fate, and minded their own business.

Such being the outcome of a system in which

the vicarious principle has no place, every man who desires to see the world full of loving hearts and kind deeds will be in favour of the great law which makes it possible for men in many ways to bear each other's burdens. Let us thoroughly believe in that law, and in all truths in sympathy with it. Let us believe that God has a gracious regard to the world for Christ's sake; that He hears prayers of saints for sinners, of Abrahams for Sodoms, of devout parents for thoughtless disobedient children; that He has a tender feeling towards an unworthy people for the sake of one eminently good man; that Israel is still beloved for the fathers' sakes, that Scotland in spite of degeneracy is dear for the martyrs' sakes, that there is hope for Africa because Livingstone loved her dark-visaged children and spent his strength and his life in her unexplored wildernesses. We must not fight shy of these ideas because the adoption of them may appear to bring us into too close contact with the creed of Rome. We must remember that there is an evil to be dreaded in an opposite quarter, viz., too close contiguity to Socinianism. In the Socinian creed the one grand law of the moral world is *individual responsibility*. That is certainly a very great law, but it does not stand alone. The moral world, like the material, is upheld in a state of stable equilibrium by the combind action of two

laws. As the planets are kept in their orbits by the balanced counteraction of the centripetal and centrifugal forces, so the moral universe is maintained in harmony and settled order by the complementary action of the two great laws of vicarious love and personal responsibility, stated by the Apostle Paul in these simple terms: "Bear ye one another's burdens," that being the law of love: "Let every man prove his own work," that being the law of individual responsibility.*

If this doctrine be, as we have seen, in accordance both with scripture and sound philosophy, then there springs out of it a manifest practical duty for all Christians. The duty is, without ceasing, to desire and to pray for the health, specially the spiritual health, of all men, and more particularly of those who are near to us by social ties, the care of whom Providence most obviously lays upon us.

Intercessory prayer and loving effort of every description, need never cease among us for want of appropriate objects. There is no lack of palsied souls in every neighbourhood. There are multitudes whose spiritual powers, yea, even whose physical powers, have been, or are in course of being, destroyed by vicious habits. Who does not know of instances of this kind? Let each of us assist in bringing such sick souls

* Gal. vi. 2-4.

under the notice of the Divine Physician. There are also many correct enough in moral habit, who are palsied in mind by the epidemic malady of doubt, hovering, hesitating, with pitiable impotence of will, between faith and infidelity, christianity and atheism. These also we ought to bring to Christ's presence, begging Him to give them a simple faith, and a reinvigorated will, that they may accept his gospel, and serve God with undivided mind and heart.

Wherever there is such earnest loving interest taken, there miracles of healing will be wrought. Christ will say now as of old: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house." Augustine likens his mother's praying for his conversion, during the years of his unbelief, to a widow of Nain carrying her dead son on the bier of thought, till Jesus should pass by and say, "Young man arise." Mothers, Christian friends, do not this in vain. Jesus does pass by; He did in the case of Augustine, uttering the word of power. If all were known, it would probably be found, that when palsied souls are healed, devout souls have been bearing them on their spirit at the throne of mercy. The great Physician goes not only where He is needed, but where He is desired. There are places to which He does not go, because the

people are whole-hearted and think they need not a physician. There are likewise places where there are plenty of sick souls, but few who shew their faith and love by praying for their salvation; where, therefore, Jesus does not many mighty works because of prevalent unbelief. But shew us a place where sick souls and praying hearts coexist in great numbers, where the need of the sinful is sore and the desire of the good for their health is most fervent, and we can tell you where there are likely to be the largest number of men carrying their sick beds on their shoulders. Clamant need and fervent prayer combined attract Divine influence, as mountains attract the clouds, or lightning-rods the electric fire. Put a thousand Abrahams into a Sodom, and the chances are that instead of being destroyed by fire from heaven it will be converted into something like a city of God. If a community be bad, and there be in it very few men even professing piety, and these few, like Lot, very indifferent in the quality of their piety, the prospects may be gloomy enough. But no fear of a community that has in it a sufficient number of Abrahams, believing, praying, spiritually-minded men; not mere religious busy-bodies making much fuss and noise with little outcome, but veritable men of God, beyond doubt more concerned for the kingdom of God than

for aught else. In that community may be many sick of the palsy, but "the prayer of faith shall save the sick," and they shall be healed.

This doctrine of the vicarious power of faith is a most welcome feature of the Galilean gospel. It puts it in the power of every man to be a little Christ, filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake. If only those who bear the Christian name could but realise the dignity of their heroic vocation, and avail themselves to the full of their opportunity. Richard Baxter in his old age, looking back on a protracted and most varied experience, expressed his profound sense of "the radical, universal, odious sin of selfishness, and of the excellency and necessity of self-denial, and of a public mind, and of loving our neighbour as ourselves." To-day, in the nineteenth century, as in the seventeenth, "a public mind" is the great need of the Church and of society. We need to have Christ-like intercessors, and helpers, and burden-bearers indefinitely multiplied. Let us pray for it. Let each man pray for himself:

> Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
> In living echoes of Thy tone;
> As Thou hast sought, so let me seek
> Thy erring children lost and lone.

O lead me, Lord, that I may lead
The wandering and the wavering feet;
O feed me, Lord, that I may feed
Thy hungering ones with manna sweet.

O strengthen me, that, while I stand
Firm on the rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRIST THE GREAT INNOVATOR.

"No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment."—MATT. ix. 16.
"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles."—MATT. ix. 17.
"This cup is the New Testament in my blood."—LUKE xxii. 20.

CHRISTIANITY a new thing, an innovation, a breach in the continuity of religious tradition—such is the burden of these texts. In the last the thought is expressly enunciated; in the other two it is plainly implied. For as in the saying, "The whole need not a physician but they that are sick," the point lies in the suggestion that the speaker is a physician, so in these sayings the appositeness fully appears only when it is understood that the speaker means to claim for the cause with which he is identified that it is a new thing. The gospel He preaches is the new piece of cloth that must not be put on an old garment, the new wine that may not be put into old skins.

Very noticeable is the boldness with which the novelty of Christianity is asserted in these parabolic sayings. Most innovators strive to

hide the novel character of the movement with which they are identified. In not a few instances it is hid in part even from themselves. They are the half unconscious instruments of a spirit which cunningly conceals its tendency from its mouth-pieces, that they may the more willingly serve it. But even when not themselves deceived, innovators are apt to play the part of dissemblers, hiding or extenuating the newness of their cause, striving to make it appear as like as possible to something already established, with a view to obviate opposition, or conciliate prejudice. Jesus was exempt from both these infirmities. He had on the one hand a perfectly clear understanding of the bearings and significance of His work. He was fully conscious that that work was new, and how far and in what respects it was new was not hidden from Him. On the other hand He frankly admitted and broadly asserted the novelty. His was not the timid, apologetic, half-hearted, prudential tone so common among those who have something fresh to tell the world. He would not degrade the piece of new cloth into a mere patch on a worn-out garment, or conceal the new wine in old skins that men might be led to believe that it also was old. He had the courage of his convictions; freedom of spirit equal to His insight. He knew what He was about, and what He knew He would tell, and

what He said in word He would give effect to in deed; daring to carry out systematically in conduct the principles of His religion, not content with enouncing a barren theory.

It is of the utmost importance for the interests of genuine evangelic piety that these facts should be well laid to heart. Let us therefore linger over them a little, considering, first, the fact that the Galilean gospel was a great innovation, and, secondly, the bold free spirit of the Divine Innovator.

I. In what respect was the gospel of Jesus new? In several respects, and chiefly in these following:—

1. In its idea of God. Jesus was the first to teach effectively the *Fatherhood* of God. The paternal conception of the divine character is not wanting in the Old Testament. But it does not occupy a dominant place there. The leading idea is that of a Ruler. God is the Righteous Governor, high and holy; men are His subjects dwelling far beneath Him on the earth His footstool, and trembling before His majesty. Such was the idea of the Divine Being, fostered by the legal economy which came in and obscured the grace of the promise made to the Fathers, as St Paul teaches. But Jesus came, and a great theological revolution took place. The legal conception of God fell into desuetude, and a brighter view came to the front. The

Lawgiver made way for the God of grace, the Judge for the Divine Father. God did not cease to be high and holy, but He became conspicuously, what He had ever been in reality, humble and good; near as well as far off, familiar as well as majestic, benignant not less than holy, loving the sinful while having no part in sin. Broadly put the difference was this. The old traditional God of Jewish theology and worship was an Exactor, the new God of Jesus was a Giver. The one demanded obedience, the other conferred gifts even on the rebellious, seeking to overcome evil with good, and by His free unmerited favour turn the disobedient to the obedience of the just.

2. Along with the new idea of God came naturally a new conception of the *kingdom of God*. The idea of such a kingdom in general was not new. It was an idea familiar to the Jewish mind from time immemorial—from the days of Moses, when Israel was first constituted a nation. But Christ's mode of conceiving the kingdom was new. The change here corresponded to the change in the idea of God. The old kingdom of God was a kingdom of law, the new kingdom of God was a kingdom of love. The old kingdom was national, the new was spiritual. Under the old the unit was the whole people of Israel, under the new it was the in-

dividual. The kingdom of Old Testament times was a righteous nation, keeping God's law and subject to the rule of its Divine King. The kingdom of New Testament times was to be found wherever there was a renewed heart believing in the Divine love, and yielding itself to God's gracious influence. The kingdom of Christ's preaching was within; it did not require numbers for its existence, yet it had room for the idea of multitude; for those in whose hearts it took up its abode must needs form themselves into a new society, and so give birth to a new humanity, independent of nationality, capable of extension over all the earth, having within it the possibilities of a holy catholic Church throughout all the world, worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth.

The difference between the old and the new at this point came out distinctly in the preaching of John the Baptist as compared with that of Jesus. In John's conception of the kingdom the ideas of law, righteousness, judgment are prominent, and the sphere within which these principles have play is the nation of Israel. In Christ's the prominent watchwords are grace, mercy, pardon, and the recipients of blessing are the humble, the contrite, the poor; Jews chiefly at first, but Jews by accident; for the condition of admission into the kingdom is not circumcision but faith. John speaks much of

the axe and the fan, of wrath and fire unquenchable; Jesus of salvation for the lost, even for the outcasts and pariahs of society. In all these respects John is the representative of an old era now drawing to a close; Jesus of a new era of grace now in its dawn.

3. These new thoughts of God and of the kingdom of God were accompanied by a *new way of life*, the typical feature of which was neglect of fasting then practised by all religious people. The society of Jesus fasted not, but ate and drank like other men, not affecting religious rigour, always of course within the limits of godly temperance. That divergence from custom was full of significance in reference both to religion and to morality. On the religious side it meant a conscience emancipated from legal scrupulosity and superstitious fear; and on the ethical side, a heart filled with humane sympathy. The Son of Man came eating and drinking because He believed in a God of love who could not be acceptably served by ascetic austerities, but by thankful use of His mercies. He came in this wise, further, because He had no faith in fasting as a cure of moral evil, but rather believed that sin was to be exorcised by love. Believing this He assimilated His manner of life to that of those whom He sought to save, as far as purity permitted, that He might get near to them, win their con-

fidence, and so lay a foundation for beneficent spiritual influence.

In both respects the change was a great innovation, an epoch-making revolution. It was the substitution of a religion of trust in the place of a religion of fear; the proclamation of self-sacrificing love as the great redeeming power, in opposition to the solitary hopeless practice of mere self-torture. And it will be apparent to all that the new way of life was in harmony with the new thoughts of God and of the kingdom of God. Belief in a God who is a Father, and in a reign of grace, has for its natural accompaniments a conscience purged from dead works of legalism to serve the living God with thankfulness and joy, and a life regulated by the supreme law of love. These things existed in perfection in Jesus. His disciples were not yet perfected in them. But they were under training for these high ends. Their Master in all He did aimed at the ultimate emancipation of their consciences from legal bondage, and the bringing of their hearts into complete subjection to the spirit of charity. It was for this purpose He taught them to abstain from fasting; as also to disregard the traditions of the elders in reference to ceremonial washings and Rabbinical rules for Sabbath observance.

II. The courage of Jesus was not less con-

spicuous than His originality in thought and conduct.

As He believed so He spoke publicly, habitually. All men knew or might know the salient points of His doctrine. He spoke to all of a God who was a Father, and of a kingdom of grace open to all; He proclaimed these truths especially to those who had most need to hear them, and were most likely to welcome them, regardless of the reproach He encountered by so doing. New ideas, especially new religious or theological ideas, are often cautiously vented only in the coterie or the club, their authors shrinking from the consequences of publicity. Not thus did Jesus hide His light under a bushel. He let His light shine so that at the end of His career He could make the manly protest: "I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing." *

Outspoken in His teaching, Jesus was equally unreserved in action. There was no attempt on His part at concealment of nonconformity to existing religious custom. All men knew that He and His disciples did not fast, or practise ritual ablutions, or comply with Rabbinical notions as to Sabbath observance. Such departures from custom could not well be hid;

* John xviii. 20.

but there was no attempt at hiding, so that any who came into even casual contact with the Jesus-circle could without the slightest difficulty become acquainted with its peculiar way of life. Conclusive evidence of this is to be found in the frequent instances of offence taken at that way recorded in the Gospels, that referring to fasting being one of the number, but only one of many.

Resolute in working out His principles in conduct, Jesus was fearless in defence of His conduct when assailed. Conciliatory in spirit, and patient in explanation with a view to the satisfaction of honest enquirers, He never apologised for censured actions as if doubtful of their propriety. Apology for His conduct He did frequently offer, but His apologies consisted not in acknowledging Himself at fault, but in explaining the principle of His action so that the apparent grounds of offence might be removed. When asked, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not? He did not reply: We have been a little careless in this matter, but we will be more attentive in future, we meant no harm, it was only an inadvertency; or, We have not been so entirely negligent of this duty as ye suppose; our remissness in the cases which came under your notice was the result of special unforeseen circumstances, and is not to be taken as an

indication of our habit or intention. He admitted fully and frankly the neglect charged, and proceeded to explain and vindicate it, calmly, dispassionately, and with every desire to conciliate, but yet without an atom of concession as to the rectitude of the conduct impugned. "My disciples do not fast, the fact is as you state it, they are not in the mood to fast, in their present temper it is impossible for them to do it. Moreover, fasting is foreign to the genius of the religion they are learning from Me, systematised fasting that is to say, for occasional acts of fasting are not excluded; and this being so, it were a folly to force on them an alien practice, for practice should harmonise with the spirit of religion and be the natural outcome of it. When the inward spirit and the outward conduct are at variance, it is as when a piece of new undressed cloth is put as a patch on an old garment, or new wine is poured into old skins. You know what the results in such cases would be. They are such that none but a fool would perpetrate these mistakes." Such was the apology of Jesus: clear, rational, temperate, but firm and uncompromising.

One who puts his foot down so resolutely in defence of departure from religious use and wont is not likely to escape equally resolute opposition. The patrons of old ways in religion are always numerous, and in no other department

of life is the spirit of conservatism so bitter and relentless. He therefore who dares to attempt to introduce new thoughts about God and things divine, or new modes of giving outward expression to the spiritual life, does so at his peril. Jesus was fully aware of this when He offered the apology above paraphrased in defence of neglecting fasting. He understood human nature, and appreciated as no man ever did before or since the blind force of resistance offered by a superstitious conscience to all attempts to rob it of its idols. He foresaw the penalty He would have to pay as an innovator, "a setter forth of strange Gods." Hence the pathetic reference to coming days when His disciples would have good cause to fast, and would be in the sad mood of which fasting is the fit expression. What a tragic train of thought flashed with lightning swiftness through Christ's mind at that moment! "Fast? No, we do not fast, and in many other respects we differ from you, first in spirit, and then, of course, in outward act. But I know well that we cannot thus differ from the customs of the time with impunity. At the end of this way of nonconformity I see a cross. When I come to it my disciples will be able to gratify you by compliance with your wishes. You will then give them good occasion for fasting by taking from them their Beloved, and leaving them in widowhood."

The gloomy foreboding was not a mistaken one. The cross did come; the Bridegroom was taken from the sorrowing society of Jesus. That was the price the Preacher of Galilee paid for daring to make some things new in theology and in religious life. But the price was not too high. For that cross, the penalty of innovation, became in turn a power of immeasurably increased innovation, enabling Him who had made some things new in His life to make all things new by His death. Of this truth also Jesus was aware, and He proclaimed it when He said on the eve of His Passion, instituting the Holy Supper, "This cup is the *new Testament* in my blood." A new Testament or covenant! That is a much more extensive innovation than the small detail of neglecting fasting. It means the supersession of the Sinaitic covenant with all that pertains to it: its whole legislative system, its Levitical worship, its festivals, sacrifice, priesthood. It means the introduction of a new era, or aeon, a new religious world. It means a new humanity with a new heart to do God's will, a new spiritual worship of God the Father who seeks no offerings but contrition and thankfulness, a new sacrifice of nobler name, in which priest and victim are one, available for the perpetual forgiveness of all sin. For all these boons were included among the blessings of the new covenant prophesied of by Jeremiah.* With the new

* Jeremiah xxxi. 31

covenant were to come the law written not merely on tables of stone, but on the heart; the knowledge of God simplified so as to be within the reach of all, even the most illiterate and the youngest; and the perpetual forgiveness of the gravest transgressions, as contrasted with the annual forgiveness of the mere ignorances of the people on the great day of atonement. All these things did come through the death of Christ. Therefore with reference to the oracle of the new covenant, as to all other prophetic oracles, He might truly say as He hung on the cross, "It is finished."

> "'Tis finished—legal worship ends,
> And gospel ages run.
> All old things now are past away,
> And a new world begun."

Well is it written of Jesus the Son of God in the opening sentences of the Epistle to the Hebrews that by Him God made the worlds, or the aeons. By the Logos God made the worlds of all sorts—the material worlds, and also the ages of time. By Him did God especially make the *Christian* world. All the changes that have come in through the Christian religion—who can reckon them up?—are due to Jesus of Nazareth. Never was there such an innovator. Who has a better right to say, "Behold I make all things new"?

What now is the duty arising out of the facts

we have been considering, for those who bear the Christian name? Surely to glorify Christ as the Maker of the new world! And how is this to be done? First, by recognising to the full extent the service rendered, by forming to ourselves a broad comprehensive idea of the vast change introduced into the world by the action of our Saviour. It is possible to come far short here. We know what miserably inadequate ideas the Judaistic party in the Apostolic Church had of the bearing of Christianity on existing institutions. They conceived of Christianity as simply a reformed Judaism. John the Baptist would have sufficed to bring about all the change they were prepared for. Christ might as well never have lived on this earth. If they had got their way things would have remained as if Christ never had lived. It is melancholy to think what an amount of effort on the part of Paul and others it required to prevent so fatal a result. How much possible good may be obstructed now by the same spirit in the church!

Second, we may glorify Christ as the maker of the new world by being ourselves children of the new era, appreciating and using to the full the liberty of a Christian man. This condition though placed second really comes first, for only out of an emancipated conscience and enlarged heart can large conceptions of the

significance of Christianity spring. The man who is not free in spirit will be a Judaist in temper, degrading the Christian religion into a new form of legalism. Above all things, therefore, in order to glorify Christ the great Innovator, there is needed the power to understand the liberty of the Christian, the heart to glory in it, the will to assert it at all hazards and within all spheres. These are not commonplace attainments. There are times when they are common. Such a time was the epoch of the Reformation, when a magnificent tribute was paid to Christ the maker of the new world, not by empty phrases, but by extensive innovations rendered necessary by the decay of the Christian spirit, amounting together to the remodelling of the religious world. There are other times when these attainments are very rare, when the temper of the church at large is legal, timid, blindly conservative, addicted to the idolatry of old custom, superstitiously afraid of all things new. And the most depressing feature of such times is that such a temper may often be found combined with firm adherence to evangelic doctrine. The evangelic creed is divorced from the evangelic spirit, and those in whom the divorce takes place imagine themselves to be *par excellence* the "evangelical party." Antecedent to experience one would be disposed to say that such a grotesque phenomenon was

an impossibility. But painful experience teaches us the truth that evangelic piety, like everything else with which men have to do, may undergo degeneracy. An eminent theologian, explaining the nature of Pharisaism, remarks, "The real virtues of one age become the spurious ones of the next. When, in the progress of the human race, any new ground is gained, whether in truth or in morals, the original gainers of that ground are great moral minds; they are minds which were penetrated by true perceptions, and by an inward sacred light, and they fought with the society of their day for the reception of that light; they therefore stand high in the scale of goodness. But it is totally different when, the new ground being once made, a succeeding generation has to use it. The use of it then is no guarantee of moral rank. . . . . A standard once raised by the convulsive efforts of a fervent minority, a mass of lower character is equal to the adoption of it; but the originators of the standard are separated by an immeasurable interval from their successors."* If this be, as without doubt it is, a true account of the nature and genesis of Pharisaism, then it follows that there can be such a thing as an evangelical Pharisaism, a traditional adoption of the evangelic creed dissociated from the evangelic spirit, and devoid of those virtues

* Mozley's University Sermons, p. 42.

with which that creed was combined in the persons of those to whom it was not a tradition but a first-hand intuition. The marks of this spurious type of evangelic piety will be either the distinctive vices of the Pharisaic character, arrogance and censoriousness, the tendency to claim a monopoly of spiritual worth and to depreciate the piety of all outside the favoured circle; or, the less blameworthy infirmities of an honest legalism, like that of John's disciples —joylessness, proneness to austerity, petty scrupulosity which magnifies matters of indifference into great principles, especially such as have been rendered venerable by old custom. It is not surely necessary to say that these qualities are not *evangelic*. Of course, arrogance and censoriousness are not. But neither is bondage to the past, and the superstitious dread of change. The standard of what is evangelic must be sought in Christ, and He, as we have seen, knew nothing of such bondage and fear. He changed whatever needed to be changed, and in so doing vindicated for all time the rights of innovation, so far as that may be demanded by the circumstances of the church at any critical period of her history.

CHAPTER XII.

THE JOY OF THE JESUS-CIRCLE.

"Can the children of the Bride-chamber mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them?"—MATT. ix. 15.

The children of the Bride-chamber, the companions of the Bridegroom, such is the title given by Jesus to His disciples. The title is intended to convey an important truth concerning disciple life. For here again the point of the parable lies in what is implied: "My disciples are as the companions of a bridegroom at a wedding feast." Understand that and you cease to wonder that they do not fast.

"The children of the Bridechamber;" what a significant name, how much it tells us as to the spirit that reigns in the Jesus-circle? That little society are like a wedding party, accompanying their friend to the place where he is to be married to his bride. Their mood is one of joy, and unrestrained mirth. As they move along with light heart they make the welkin ring with laughter and song. By no other emblem could the idea of an absolutely unqualified happiness have been more vividly or

strongly expressed. For the marriage-day is the one brightest day in the life of mortals. It is a bright, cloudless day for all, even for the poor, the heavily burdened sons of toil. On that day the very beggar forgets his misery, and feels a joy that is not marred by painful memories, or unpleasant anticipations, though his bed be but the grassy margin of the highway. Cares and sorrows come to all, in the years which follow; but they cast no shadows on the bridegroom's path. On his wedding-day he takes no thought of to-morrow; his bliss is as complete as if it were to be eternal. Such was the bliss of Christ's disciples.

This bliss was not an accident, or an affair of temperament. Joy is not so rife in this world that we can witness it without feeling it needful to enquire into its cause. When the elder brother, approaching his father's house, heard the sound of music and dancing, he quite naturally asked, What these things meant? There is, indeed, in early youth such a thing as a joy of mere existence: it is what constitutes the peculiar felicity of childhood. There are also some who are blessed with such a happy temperament that even after they have reached the years of maturity, and all through life, they retain somewhat of the buoyancy and joyous recklessness of boyish days. But such kitten-like friskiness, and irrepressible elasticity are

not likely to be found among toiling, hard-fisted, weather-beaten men like the companions of Jesus, formerly fishermen and tax-gatherers. If they are in the mood of men going to a wedding, there must be powerful influences at work tending to raise them above the mist and gloom of care into the serene atmosphere of joy where no clouds intercept the sunlight. What is the secret of their joy; what are its component elements?

In general, the joy of the disciples was the natural effluence of the new life imparted to those who joined the society of Jesus. It was the joy of being in Christ's company, and in part it was a reflection of the joy that was in Christ Himself. For while Christ was in a profound degree a man of sorrow, He was also very emphatically a man of joy. His was a threefold gladness. First, He had the joy of His vocation, the deep satisfaction connected with doing good to men. His desire to confer benefit was a passion, and when opportunity for gratifying it, such as He had just enjoyed at Matthew's farewell feast, offered itself, it afforded Him intense delight. Then in His private or personal capacity He had the joy of one whose religion is not the product of human traditions, but is an absolutely original thing; a fountain of fresh intuitions of truth, issuing in a stream of life which shapes its own course

and flows freely, unconstrained by the embankments of custom. Inexpressibly sweet at all times is this joy of "religion new given," fresh from the Fountain of light and life, the Father in heaven! Compared with this religion of revived "intuitive and fresh perceptions," what a dull hum-drum existence that of the Pharisees, or even of the Baptist and his disciples, with its methodised fasting and praying and alms-giving!

Specially sweet is such a free life of the spirit in fellowship with God if it comes after an experience of the tread-mill routine of religious mechanism. What a dismal doom to have the Rabbis for teachers and taskmasters; to be obliged to think Rabbinical thoughts of God, and to practise Rabbinical morals; lax on this side, ridiculously strict on that! The gospel history gives us little information about our Lord's connection with the Rabbinical schools or schoolmasters. It is quite credible however, that in His boyhood He had to endure such instruction as they had to give. It may, as Zinzendorf suggests, have been a part of His humiliation state in early years to have His head filled with "Rabbinical rubbish."* His utterances during the period of His public ministry exhibit familiarity with the doctrine of the scribes. One thing, however, is certain,

* *Vide* "The Humiliation of Christ," 2d edition, p. 424.

that if Rabbinical rubbish got access by any means, through books or by oral instruction or by hearsay, to the head of the boy Jesus, it never found the way to His heart. Even at the early age of twelve He had a most unrabbinical way of speaking concerning God. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business."* But just because the heart of the holy child never could have any sympathy with Rabbinical follies in doctrine and life, it would be all the greater a trial to be obliged to give them a place in His understanding, or to be required by the proprieties of life even to seem to regard them with respect. A boy may not decently appear wiser than a gray-haired man, yet how easy for any unsophisticated open-hearted child—for a Peter, not to speak of a Jesus, to see that the Rabbis were learned fools! What a burden, what a bondage, what a humiliation to see this, yet have to bear it all in silence till the years of maturity arrived, when it would no longer be unseemly to have openly a mind of one's own! And what a relief then to escape for ever from the external sway of these blind guides, or the yoke of deference to their reputation, and to be free to utter the long-cherished thoughts of the hidden inner life in the form of a doctrine of God credible and acceptable, making trust in Him for time and

* Luke ii. 49.

eternity possible and easy, and the worship of Him a delight, and to shape conduct by broad rational principles rather than by petty vexatious, arbitrary rules! Of this felicity Jesus had experience. He knew the joy not only of religious originality, but also of religious *liberty* from abhorred bondage.

Into these joys of Jesus the twelve more or less entered on becoming His disciples. Their joy was, doubtless, in all respects faint and shallow compared with their Master's; still, it was the same in kind, if not in degree. They shared in some measure His pleasure in doing good and cherishing beneficent affections. The Galilean mission was an education in philanthropy. In the society of Jesus they were learning betimes the sacred enthusiasm of humanity, and were being gradually raised above the narrow prejudices of their age and nation against particular classes. Every meeting, like that in Matthew's house with publicans and sinners, was a new lesson in the grace of charity. The very composition of the apostolic band was a discipline for all its members in tolerance and catholic sympathy. In the goodly fellowship were united fishermen, tax-gatherers, ex-members of political parties, Galileans, Judæans.* Here was a holy catholic church in miniature, having for its watchword, all old

* *Vide* "The Training of the Twelve," p. 33, 3d ed.

distinctions merged in the common relation to the one Lord.

The disciples further had part in the joy of fresh religious intuitions. They were not as yet strong enough to be original themselves, but they could in some measure appreciate the originality of Jesus. The utterances of His mind were a source of delight to them, they hardly knew why. It was such a pleasure as students feel in listening to the prelections of a renowned master in science, philosophy, or theology, or lovers of poetry in reading a new poem full of bright conceptions; such a pleasure as all intelligent persons find in the talk of a man of genius. They were dull, illiterate Galileans, but they had honest moral instincts, and knew wisdom when they met it. They soon perceived that Jesus was no ordinary rabbi, that He spake with unique authority, that He had "words of eternal life."

Yet, once more, these disciples participated in a slight degree in the joy of spiritual freedom. Away north in Galilee, remote from Jerusalem the headquarters of the scribes, they probably did not come very much under the malign influence of Rabbinism. But even there the evil thing penetrated. A man could hardly live anywhere in the Holy Land without having his shoulders galled by the heavy yoke. And if the companions of Jesus escaped with a slight

taste of the bondage, they had been called to endure something analogous to the Pharisaic regime in another quarter. Some of them at least had been disciples of John before they came to Jesus. Between the Scribes and John there was certainly a wide difference—all the difference there is between trifling and earnestness, hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious, and downright sincerity. A hard, strict religious system is always respectable and bearable when it is found associated with such high moral qualities. Nevertheless it remains true that John's way was hard and strict, and, in detail, very much the same as that of the rabbis. John was a noble prophet of moral law, and his earnestness in preaching repentance and righteousness had an irresistible attraction for young ingenuous souls. And so they flocked to the wilderness to hear him preach and to become his disciples, and to practise the better life under his direction. And for a while John's yoke might seem easy and his burden light, because of the nobleness of spirit which redeemed and glorified all its austerities. But by and bye it began to feel irksome. The daily round of prayers and fasts and purifyings grew to be monotonous and wearisome, and the heart craved for something different. Jesus came, and His look and tone told the ascetics of the desert that He could supply the want. Henceforth John decreased

in the esteem of his own followers, and Jesus increased. John's work was done, he had served his purpose, those that had been with him had got good from him; but the proof of this was that they had grown tired of him, and had recognised in Jesus the true Bridegroom of the soul with whom it is good to be united in eternal wedlock. And so they joined the society of Jesus, and in His company experienced the joy of religious liberty, the joy of deliverance from rules to principles, from mechanical routine to spontaneity, from asceticism to the healthful activities connected with the work of the kingdom.

The Pauline literature helps us to appreciate the full significance of these elements of religious joy—the joy of *love*, the joy of *fresh inspiration*, and the joy of *liberty*. There we find the germs unfolded, and the doctrine writ large. Paul passed through a tragic religious experience which gave intensity to all the *momenta* of his Christian consciousness. His experience differed from that both of Christ and of Christ's disciples. In the soul of Jesus no painful inward struggles occurred between contending theories or principles—opposing ways of thinking of God, man, duty. All through His life, from early youth to mature manhood, He was blessed, according to all indications, with the unclouded vision of truth, and with an unbroken

serenity of spirit. The spiritual insight, which for most men is a conquest, appears to have been for Him as easy as the vision of the physical world. The contrast in His case was not between light and darkness within, but between light within and darkness without. Within was the tranquil contemplation of God, without was the murky atmosphere of Rabbinic lore seeking to penetrate into the sunlit mind and turn its day into night; but succeeding only in making it conscious of the proximity of something ungenial.

In the inner history of the twelve, likewise, there does not appear to have been any great crisis. They had not, indeed, always lived in the light; but spiritual illumination came to them gradually, not like a sudden flash of lightning, but with the gentle, stealthy approach of dawn. The wisdom and the goodness of Jesus charmed the simple fishermen of Galilee. When they heard Him speak of a Father-God, and of an idyllic life of trust, free from care as that of the birds and the flowers, and of a kingdom of heaven alone worthy to take the first place in men's thoughts, they felt that they had never heard the like before: nothing so beautiful, and, strange as the teaching might seem, nothing so true; and with little hesitation they forsook their handicrafts and joined His society, that they might hear more of the same kind,